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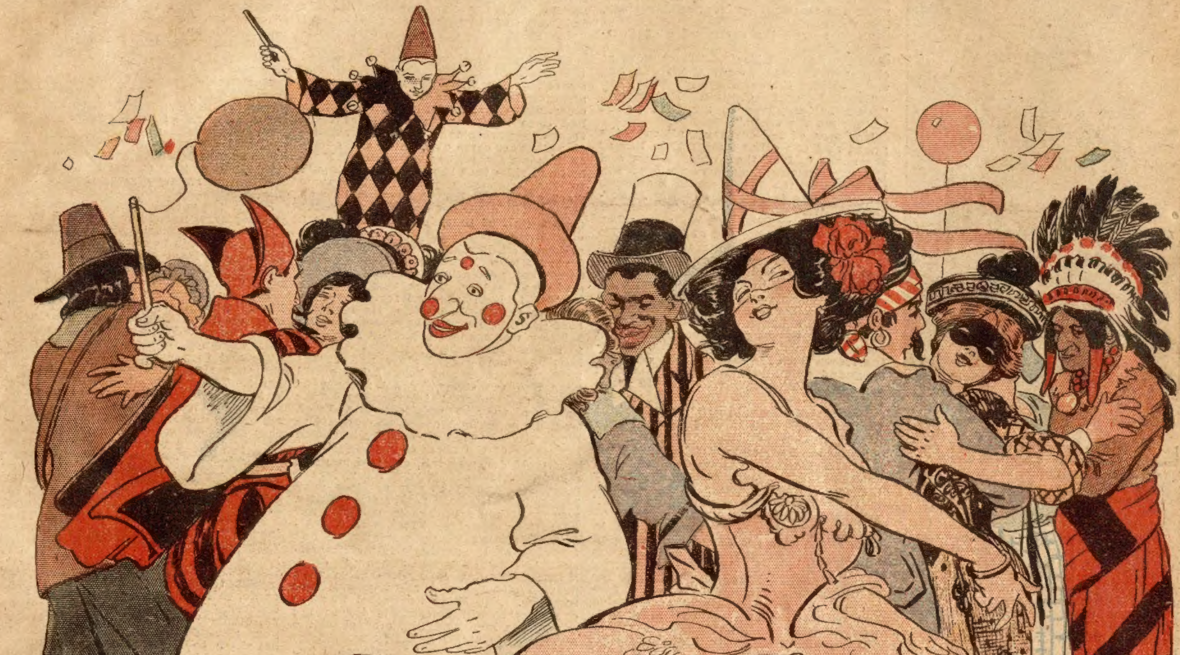
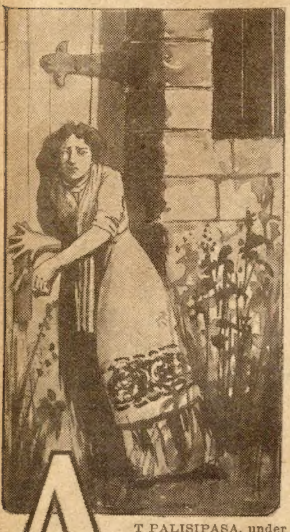


THE MASKED BALL

DEAD MEN'S RIFLES

By HAPSBURG LIEBE



AT PALISIPASA, under the withering fire of the brown soldiers in the command of determined Gregorio Burla, Spanish Filipino, five men of Company L had fallen. Their five guns had been placed in the commissary at San Fernando, where the company had its headquarters.

When the artificer went to get one of these guns, with which he meant to supply a soldier whose riflebolt had been broken, he found that the five weapons were gone. The doors had had no tampering, evidently; nor did any of the windows show any signs of having been forced.

Captain Rutherford was notified. He hastened to the commissary to verify the artificer's report. His examination of the doors and windows showed nothing more than that of the artificer had shown. But the company commander found that a thousands rounds of ammunition also were gone.

Before he could reach a decision in regard to taking measures toward learning more of the affair, night had fallen, the warm, mysterious night of the tropics. And with darkness came a shower of steeljackets from the little hill above the hospital building, one of these bullets wounding Captain Rutherford in the right arm.

The following morning, a few dozens of empty Krag-Jorgensen cartridges were found on the brow of the hill above the hospital.

Captain Rutherford ordered a thorough search of San Fernando, a search that spared no room, no cellar, no garret. This thorough combing was rewarded by the finding of the five missing guns, together with about nine hundred rounds of ammunition, in the bamboo and nipa house of Minio Borja, the "presidente," a slender, sharp-featured Filipino of the Ilocano blood.

Captain Rutherford was not surprised at this. He had long suspected that Borja's professed allegiance to the American occupation of the islands was only professed. Borja had been too fervent in his declaration of loyalty to be honest, he had told himself.

The white-garbed, barefoot presidente was frightened, it was plain. His face was ashen, and his fingers trembled so much that he could hardly roll a cigarette. The Captain led him to company headquarters.

"Borja," he said in Spanish, "when you undertake to fool Americans, you're into a problem. Will you please be so kind as to inform me how you obtained an entrance to the commissary?"

Borja looked the company commander squarely in the eye and swore by all he held sacred that he had not been inside the commissary since the Americans had been stationed in San Fernando. Unfortunately, Captain Rutherford judged men by their eyes, chiefly.

"Then how did you come by the rifles?" inquired the officer.

"Senor Capitan," said the Ilocano, "I bought them. If I tell you who I bought them from—if I show you the man—will you promise me that you will protect me, and that my own sin shall be made a little less in your worthy judgment?"

Still Borja's eyes did not quail before the Captain's penetrating gaze. The Captain was impressed.

"I give you my word of honor to that effect," agreed the officer.

"Then," smiled Borja, cunning daredevil; "have your trumpeter to blow the assembly call. For I bought the rifles and ammunition from an American, Senor Capitan."

"No!" roared the commander of Company L.

"Yes," declared Borja. "They were so cheap—twenty pesos for the rifles, and ten pesos for the cartridges."

"Borja," said Captain Rutherford, "you'd better prove to me that you're telling me the truth."

The men of the company, all save the guard and one other man, fell in line at the shrill call of the bugle. Borja and the Captain then began to walk slowly along before the double ranks, their eyes searching the faces of the eighty American soldiers.

Borja had pointed out no man when they had reached the end of the line. He had meant to allow his memory to fail him. But a circumstance caused him to carry out the plan of a false accusation in the attempt to help his own case.

The circumstance was this: the one missing soldier came rushing into his place from a bystreet, his arrival being greeted by covert and uncomplimentary glances from his comrades, and a lowering frown from his captain. Borja's cunning and quick judgment told him that the tardy American was not in high favor.

He pointed a lean, brown finger straight toward the flushed face of Edwin Massingale, a private of the rear rank.

"Ah, now I understand!" he exclaimed, a light appearing to dawn on his foxlike countenance. "Please believe me, Senor Capitan, I would not for all the wealth of the world accuse falsely; and I very much think that is the man."

Edwin Massingale was really not in high favor with the officers and enlisted men of his company. The truth of the matter was that he had joined the army because he had found himself unfit for anything else. He had been left a fortune at the death of his parents, which had occurred simultaneously in a railway disaster; and, having been reared with a silver spoon in his mouth, his money had gone quickly. He had tried to work; but there seemed to be nothing that his white hands could do. Embittered, he had thought it better that the Government support him in return for his soldiering than for friends to support him for nothing. And of course he had found the life of a private in the army very empty and disappointing.

The Captain ordered the company, save Massingale, dismissed. Massingdale stood still and waited, seeming like a solitary tree left when the forest about it had been cut away. His fine, classical face was still flushed, and his deep blue eyes were filled with pain—for he had guessed that he was accused of the theft of the five rifles and the thousand rounds of ammunition. He was on the verge of desperation; every nerve and fiber in his lithe young body was in a tremor; this last straw of his dissatisfaction with army life was ready to break the back of his delicately fashioned and patrician spirit. He needed a doctor rather than a court-martial.

And it seemed so much worse because of the fact that he was due to be discharged in a very few days—and because of the greater fact that he had recently found, loved, and won the love of, the finest, grandest, most beautiful woman he had ever known.

The first sergeant of the company stood for several minutes in close conversation with Captain Rutherford; then the Captain and Minio Borja approached the young man who stood like a solitary tree after the forest about it had been cut away.

"Why did you do it?" asked Captain Rutherford, his gray eyes, stern and as hard as steel, fastening themselves frigidly upon Massingale's blue ones.

"I didn't do it, sir," replied Massingale, and he dropped his gaze!

His weakened spirit could not withstand the fire of the Captain's cold, gray eyes.

"I find from Sergeant Elberfield," said Captain Rutherford, slowly, "that you have always been hard to please; that you do not get along with your comrades; and that you always need more money than you happen to have. If it were not for these things, I should be more inclined to believe you. I certainly hope you are innocent." His voice fell, and became more grave: "Young man, I tell you that I would rather give ten years of my already-much lived life than to know that one soldier of my company had been so low, so dishonorable, as to steal our guns and cartridges and sell them to the enemy."

He touched his wounded arm suggestively. Massingale stood rigid, unanswering, frozen to silence. The Captain, although a worthy man and a good soldier, was for once mistaken in his judgment of mankind, that judgment being based upon the actions of the suspect.

Captain Rutherford turned and called the corporal of the guard from the guardhouse, which was a low, squat structure across the square from the company quarters building, and which had done service as a carcel for more than one government. The noncommissioned officer came obediently, and obediently took away Massingale's cartridge-belt and rifle; then he marched Massingale to the temporary prison. Massingale went brokenly, silently, seeming like an old man; it appeared that he was in too deep a gulf of gloom to care to offer a defense.

Now, on a low hill to the south of the town of San Fernando, there stood a somewhat pretentious mansion of gray stone and stucco, which was distinctly Spanish in both type and furnishing. It had its flower-filled patio, its spacious roof gardens, its vinehung verandas; its interior was made elegant by much old mahogany furniture, by many old paintings of square-rigged ships and buccaneers, by costly and beautiful Oriental rugs and tapestries, by all manner of books and musical instruments. This belonged to and was occupied by a wealthy copra and abaca merchant and his family of two, well-bred, full-blooded Spaniards of the name of Sanquebel.

The old don was tall, quiet of manner, distinguished-looking, with his upturned mustache and his pointed iron-gray beard; the dona was rather stout, but a person of some beauty in spite of her age; their daughter Flora was a full-figured, mature young woman who had inherited all her mother's former comeliness, a young woman whose dark, splendid Spanish eyes were alive with passion and fire and the true spirit of romance. And Flora Sanquebel was the one that Edwin Massingale loved; the one whose love, undying, eternal as the stars, Edwin Massingale had won.

So when the news of Massingale's imprisonment had been carried to the sympathetic ears of the Sanquebels, the don, urged particularly by his daughter, hastened to see Captain Rutherford and find out if it were true.

The Captain confirmed the Spaniard's fears, and Sanquebel, after having been refused the privilege of entering the guardhouse that he might offer comfort to his young American friend, returned to his wife and daughter with his bearded face much troubled.

Even the Senorita Flora's tears and pleadings availed nothing when she tried, the following day, to gain entrance to the old carcel. So the Senorita Flora dried her eyes, went home, and prepared a very fine dinner for her sweetheart, which was permitted to pass the grim portals of the guardhouse.

And in the center of a square of bread, Edwin Massingale found a bit of paper that had certainly not dropped there by accident. The message began with, and ended with, a term of endearment; it told him to be awake at midnight, and to be fully dressed.

It suggested a possible means of escape. But to run away would add much to his supposed guilt. So, although it seemed to Massingale that he had but one friend on earth, he decided that he would not run away. But, for all his determination, he did not disrobe when "taps" had blown; nor did he go to sleep.

Every minute of the three hours that lay between "taps" and midnight was leaden, sluggish. The prisoner's mind was filled with all manner of troublous thoughts and imaginings. A thousand times he saw himself a twenty-year convict on stony Alcatraz, with disgrace and suffering eating away his heart, burning out his life, destroying his soul. The cry of an iguana somewhere outside caused him to start and go pale each time the raucous, unearthy gaggle came from its snaky, yellow throat; the tramp of post-one sentry was as the tramp of a legion of hostile two-footed brutes. Several times a nightbird of the tropics sang out,

"Court-martial! Court-martial! Court-martial!"

Beyond the outer wall of his cell was an old garden grown over with banana plants, among which grew tame flowers gone wild from the desolation of war. In this wall there was a door of hardwood bound and riveted with iron. Shortly after the passing of midnight, there came from the lock of this ironbound door a grating, as of a key being cautiously turned. Another moment, and a breath of the fresh night breeze smote upon Edwin Massingale's face; still another moment, and he heard the soft approach of careful feet.

Massingale sat up on his cot, making a very slight noise as he did so. A few seconds later a pair of feeling hands touched his knees.

"Querido!" whispered the rich, sweet voice of the Senorita Flora Sanquebel. "Querido! Come quickly!"

Massingale rose before her. His trembling hands found her bare, rounded shoulders and gripped them so hard that she sank a little from the pain.

"Quickly!" she repeated.

"But I am innocent," replied Massingale, his whispered voice slightly hoarse. "An innocent man cannot help his cause, surely, by running away before he is tried."

Flora Sanquebel leaned forward and put her arms about her American sweetheart's neck. Massingale could feel her breath upon his burning face.

"Then at least come with me and let my father tell you of the danger you are in," begged Flora.

She took him by the wrists, and led him slowly out into the grown-over garden, herself walking cautiously backward. Then she closed the ironbound door, and they hastened through the maze of verdure and to a dark and deserted street that ran straight toward the Sanquebel home. The mansion of stucco and stone had no lights that were visible from without. At the front door they were admitted immediately; it was evident that they had been momentarily expected. Without a word, the young woman led the American to an inner room, a sort of library, in which burned half a dozen and one candles in an old-fashioned brazen candlestick. The don and his wife followed them into the room.

Sanquebel offered his hand, and Massingale took it gratefully. Then they were seated about a table that was placed on a large rug on the center of the floor.

"Senor Massingale," began Don Ricardo, his countenance showing much concern, "I first wish to say that my apparent lack of gallantry in not rescuing you myself instead of allowing my daughter to do it was the outcome of much thinking. I feared that you would not come with me. As to where I got the key with which you were liberated, I have had it for years.

"As to my interest in you," he went on, seeming very sincere, "it is because I like you, and because my daughter has told me of your mutual affection for each other. Flora is our only child. If she sets her heart upon choosing her own husband, shall we object? Look at her, Senor Massingale, and see if you think it would do any good to object!"

Flora was sitting across the book-littered table from the American, her arms, bare to the elbows, lying crossed on a pile of newspapers. Her lace mantilla had fallen back, revealing a great quantity of dead-black hair; her red lips were parted in a tender smile, and her beautiful dark eyes were aglow with the light that a man may see but few times in his three score and ten years.

Edwin Massingale felt the force of her gaze. He was enraptured; his whole being was athrob. To him the Senorita Flora was the finest, grandest woman in the world.

Don Ricardo put a hand on the young American's arm.

"Listen," he said. "I myself went to see your commanding officer, and I learned that your case is serious—that, in fact, you have no chance whatever to escape a military prison if you are tried. So if you are wise, you will remain in hiding until it is safe for you to appear."

"It would be cowardly," declared Massingale.

"Better that than a long term in a military prison!" exclaimed Sanquebel, and the two women nodded their head emphatically.

"And then there's the worry of being hunted," said Massingale.

"Cascaras!" thundered Don Ricardo. "Who would know you after you have allowed a beard to grow, and after you have changed your name? Senor Massingale, I will hide you here until you are sufficiently disguised. I will—but I must have your oath that you will not reveal to any other person without my own permission, anything that I may tell you."

Massingale slowly raised his right

(Continued on page seventeen.)

TO LEDGER READERS

Next week's leader in the Ledger will be an extraordinary story called **"THE PALACE OF DOOM; or, THE PASSION OF AN EMPRESS,"** by Hugh Hamilton. It deals with the life of that strange and powerful woman, Queen Catherine of Russia. There are dramatic and thrilling things in this story. Don't fail to read it. Look out for **"DORIS LYNDHAL'S FLIGHT; or, THE GIRL-WIFE'S TEST,"** by Mason Ray, which will follow. A whole lot of good things are going to be found in the pages of the Ledger. It is acknowledged to be the best story paper in America. Stick to it.

SNARES OF FATE

Or, TANGLED THREADS – By EMMA HOWARD WIGHT

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CHAPTER XXI.

"THAT'S BULLY, DAD!"

HARRY VINCENT came into the diningroom of the Governor's villa at the Shore, where his mother and father were seated at breakfast, three years later.

"I overslept myself this morning," he declared, as he came forward and took a seat at the table.

"That is hardly surprising," declared Mrs. Vincent, regarding her son with a fond smile. "You were dancing until four o'clock this morning."

"Oh, I wasn't one bit tired, mother!" said Harry, attacking his breakfast with keen relish. "The dance was fine, wasn't it?"

"Yes, indeed," replied Mrs. Vincent. "And so many pretty girls!"

"Yes," murmured Harry, indifferently, intent upon helping himself to fried chicken.

His father glanced at him a little quizzically.

"They were so pretty that Harry could not make up his mind which was the most attractive," he said. "I noticed that he was quite impartial in his attentions."

Harry laughed. "That's the truth, father. They all looked pretty much the same to me."

"Harry hasn't proved as susceptible as you once fancied he would," said Governor Vincent, with a smiling glance at his wife. "Do you remember his enthusiasm over a song and dance girl he saw in one of the mining towns we visited three years ago?"

"Yes, I remember," replied Mrs. Vincent.

She looked at her son. He was looking thoughtfully down at his plate. He did not speak for a moment or so, then he said, a little gravely:

"I have never seen any girl as pretty as she was."

"No doubt you would have been disenchanted if you had seen her by daylight," remarked the Governor, carelessly.

Harry looked up quickly and was about to speak. His eyes met those of his mother. He flushed and remained silent.

"By the way, Henry, do you know who the people are that have bought the Bluff Villa?" asked Mrs. Vincent, turning to her husband.

"Harmer Stanley, a widower with one daughter," replied the Governor.

"Stanley," said Mrs. Vincent, musingly. "It's a good name. The Stanleys are one of the oldest and best families in Virginia."

"I was introduced to Stanley at the club last night," remarked Governor Vincent. "He is a highly educated, aristocratic-looking man. His daughter, I understand, had just graduated from some fashionable Northern boarding school. Stanley appears to be rich. I wish you would send him and his daughter a card for our reception on the eighteenth, Helen."

"Very well, I will. Mrs. Lacy was speaking of the Stanleys last night. She and her husband called upon them. She says the girl is the most beautiful creature she ever saw. Mrs. Lacy was charmed with her."

"Another pretty girl at the Shore!" exclaimed Harry, lifting his brows. "We shall have a surfeit of pretty girls. A few homely girls, to vary the monotony, would be refreshing. By the way, dad," looking smilingly at the Governor, "I met an old sweetheart of yours yesterday."

Governor Vincent shook his head.

"You are laboring under a delusion, my boy. I never had but one sweetheart, and," with a smiling, tender glance at his wife, "she is still and always will be my sweetheart."

"Well, I was told that Miss Kathryn Ward was once a sweetheart of yours," declared Harry, with a mischievous smile.

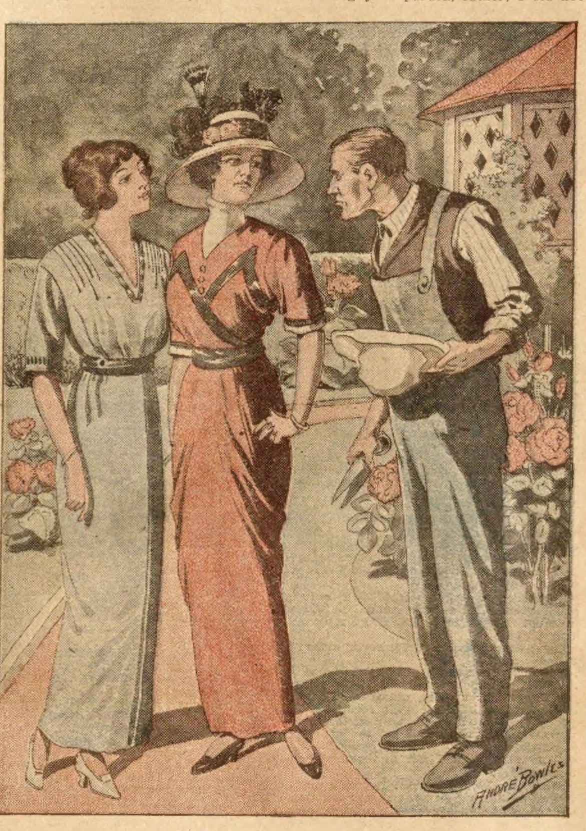
"Oh!" exclaimed the Governor, and looked for the moment a little self-conscious, greatly to the delight of Harry. "I was not aware that Miss Ward had returned from Europe."

"Yes, she is here at the Shore, stopping at the Hotel Arundel," Harry explained. "I was introduced to her at the Carters' bridge party. I thought her very nice. She is such a thoroughbred. But you showed your good taste, dad," rising, going to his mother and kissing her. "There is no other woman to be compared to my beautiful mother."

"That is my opinion," declared the Governor, with a smile. "But that's a mistake about Kathryn Ward, my boy. We were good friends at one time, but that was all. Senator Ward died about ten years ago, and Miss Ward went abroad. I have not seen her for a long time."

Harry went to the window and stood looking out at the sea sparkling the bright sunlight. His mother's eyes followed him fondly, proudly. He was a splendid-looking young fellow, with his handsome face, bright auburn hair, and athletic build.

Governor Vincent arose and went from the diningroom to his study. His secretary was there, ready to commence the morning's work. The Governor sat down, took up a letter from the pile before him, and fell into a reverie without looking at it.



She recognized him at once.

He was thinking of Kathryn Ward, to whom he had not given a thought in years. The fact that she was at the Shore and that they would meet frequently during the summer was not altogether pleasing to him. She had not given him the slightest reason for supposing that she resented his marriage. She was too proud and too thoroughly mistress of herself for that. The intimacy that existed between himself and the Wards had ceased at his marriage, Vincent found that he was not dependent, after all, upon Senator Ward's influence. He had made up his mind to rise and he did. From commonwealth attorney, he became judge of the Circuit Court, then State Senator, and, finally, Governor of Virginia.

And in all the honors that he achieved, the woman he had married for love, who had brought him nothing save her beauty, bore her part with grace, dignity, and tact. Ideally happy in his married life, Vincent was devoutly thankful that he had not married a woman he did not love. He had never ceased to feel grateful to his mother for her advice. "Marry the woman you love." The elder Mrs. Vincent had had a great affection for her son's beautiful wife. She had been dead now for twelve years.

Governor Vincent aroused himself and turned toward his secretary.

"Well, Howell, anything of importance this morning?" he asked.

"A plea for clemency for Nathan Grant, convicted of murder in the first degree, has been sent to your excellency," replied the secretary, handing the Governor the papers.

Governor Vincent frowned. The secretary glanced at him a little questioningly. It was very rarely that Governor Vincent exercised clemency on behalf of a murderer, or pardoned one.

As he was looking over the papers, the door opened and Harry came into the room. He was in riding dress and carried a whip in his hand. He looked very handsome.

"I beg your pardon, father; I did not know you were busy," he said, pausing just beyond the threshold.

The Governor looked up, his eyes lingering on his son's bright, boyish face.

"Come here, Harry," he said.

The young man came and stood beside his father.

"I have here a plea for clemency for a man convicted of murder in the first degree," said the Governor. "I will not go into the details of the case, I will simply state that I do not believe that the extenuating circumstances justify me in exercising clemency. As you know, I am a believer in capital punishment, 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.' That is my idea of justice. However, in this case, I am a little undecided." He looked up at his son with a half-smile. "What do you think about it?"

Harry did not immediately reply. He looked thoughtful, his face was grave.

"It's a dreadful thing to have a person one loves die on the gallows or in the electric chair," he said, at length. "I cannot imagine any greater suffering coming to a human being." He laid his hand on his father's shoulder half pleadingly. "Do it, father; commute that poor wretch's sentence to imprisonment for life. Never mind the facts in the case, do it for—for the sake of some innocent person who loves him."

The Governor smiled a little grimly.

"That's a standpoint from which I had not considered the matter," he declared. He was silent for a moment, as from out of the mists of the past there arose before him the white, anguished face of the young mountaineer, David Steele, as he had seen it when the sentence of death was being pronounced upon his brother. As commonwealth attorney and judge, he had seen many faces wrung with anguish under the same conditions, but only one came back to him—the face of David Steele. Still he felt no pity nor compassion for him. If Governor Vincent had analyzed the impelling force that rendered him so implacable toward a man guilty of murder, he would have awakened to the fact that it was the crime of John Steele, not because the assassin had aimed at his life, but because another had fallen a victim. Harry, watching his father's face, saw it harden.

"It is true enough what you urge, Harry," he said. "But in this world the innocent are always suffering for the guilty."

"In a case of this kind, the innocent suffer a thousand times more than the guilty," declared Harry. "The condemned man goes to his death on the gallows or in the electric chair, and is done with life and all pertaining thereto. But those who cared for him must live on and suffer. For it seems to me that they can never recover from the horror, the anguish of tender pity."

Governor Vincent looked at his son with some surprise.

"Why, Harry, who would have fancied that you felt so strongly about such things!" he exclaimed.

"To tell you the truth, father, I didn't know it myself," replied Harry, with a smile. "The thing just seemed to get a sudden grip on me. But, dad," persuasively, "I do want you to have pity, not so much on this man, but upon those who love him. I remember once seeing a man whose son had been hanged, and there was a look upon his face I had never seen on the face of any other man. I have never forgotten it."

"You shall have it your way, Harry," said the Governor. "I'll commute the sentence of death to imprisonment for life."

"That's bully, dad!" exclaimed Harry, a pleased look on his handsome face. "Thank you!"

"You look as pleased, Harry, as though I had done something for you," said the Governor. "A personal favor."

Harry looked thoughtful.

"To tell you the truth, dad, I have a feeling as though you had," he declared. "Perhaps Fate has a good turn in store for me."

He went out smilingly.

"Howell," the Governor said to his secretary, as he signed the papers commuting the sentence of Nathan Grant, "that's the first sentence of death I have commuted since I've been Governor of Virginia."

"Indeed, your excellency?" murmured the secretary, who was well aware of the fact.

"Yes, and I feel pretty good over it," declared Governor Vincent. "But I wouldn't have done it if it had not have been for Harry, God bless the boy!"

CHAPTER XXII.

FLORENCE STANLEY.

THE Governor and his wife stood at the end of the long, beautifully decorated receptionroom, receiving their guests. Mrs. Vincent looked regally lovely in a gown of white satin, heavy with pearl embroidery, with diamonds about her throat, and in her rich auburn hair.

Harry Vincent stood slightly back of his mother, his handsome face wearing a rather bored expression. He found the reception tiresome and was wishing that the dancing would begin in the ballroom.

A very slim woman, wearing a Paris gown of wonderfully blended shades of green, with a necklace of emeralds and diamonds about her throat, came up to the Governor and his wife.

"How do you do, Kathryn?" Governor Vincent said, as he shook hands with her. "I did not know until yesterday that you had returned to America."

Kathryn made some conventional reply and turned to Mrs. Vincent. Henry Vincent looked at his wife and Kathryn Ward as they exchanged greetings. The former appeared almost as fresh and blooming and lovely as when he had married her twenty-four years previous. The latter had aged. Her pale hair was thickly threaded with gray, her face was lined and wrinkled.

She seemed to feel that he was rather closely observing her, for she turned suddenly toward him and their eyes met. The look in her eyes, unfathomable though it was, sent a thrill of uneasiness through him.

"I must congratulate you, Henry, upon your accession to the gubernatorial chair," she said.

He bowed. "Thank you!'

"My father prophesied that you would one day be Governor of Virginia."

"The Senator was a very good friend of mine," declared Governor Vincent, with suppressed irony, for he was well aware that Senator Ward had worked against him in a quiet way after his marriage to Helen Rhodes.

Other guests claimed the Governor's attention, and Kathryn passed on.

"Good evening, Miss Ward," said Harry, stepping forward, holding out his hand, He found her interesting. He admired her because she was so perfectly bred, well-poised, and had such exquisite taste in dress. They stood conversing. Harry found her more interesting than girls.

Suddenly his face changed, his eyes widened, he drew a long breath. Kathryn looked to see what had occasioned the change. A tall, artistocratic looking man and a young girl were approaching. The girl wore a misty white gown, with a necklace of rare pearls about her throat. There was no color about her save the glittering gold of her hair, the wild-rose pink of her cheek, and the tropic red of her lips. She had a face like some rare flower. Her slim figure was the perfection of grace. Her bare shoulders and arms were exquisite.

Kathryn looked from the girl to Harry Vincent. There was a flush on his face, his eyes were fixed upon the girl, he seemed oblivious to everything else. Suddenly he spoke, seemingly unconscious that he was speaking his thoughts aloud:

"Absurd!" he murmured. "Of course, it isn't she. It couldn't be."

"Miss Stanley is very beautiful, isn't she?" said Kathryn, softly.

Harry started and turned toward her. "I beg your pardon!" he murmured. He paused a moment to recover himself. "Is that young lady Miss Stanley?" he asked.

"Yes, that is Miss Stanley and Mr. Stanley," replied Kathryn. "The people living at the Bluff Villa."

"I did not know who they were," explained Harry. Then he added, in a low voice, "Yes, she is very beautiful."

Kathryn moved away to speak to some one. Harry went to where his mother was talking to Miss Stanley, while the Governor exchanged conventional remarks with her father. Mrs. Vincent introduced her son to Miss Stanley. The girl's exquisite color deepened and her wonderful blue, dark-fringed eyes wavered and fell under Harry's eager, passionate gaze.

Mrs. Vincent, who had found the girl thoroughly self-possessed, wondered a little at her sudden self-consciousness. She almost immediately recovered herself.

"You will give me the first waltz, Miss Stanley?" queried Harry. "And the fourth and the sixth and——" he paused as his mother laughed.

"Why, Harry, you are insatiable!" she exclaimed. "What will Miss Stanley think of you?"

Florence Stanley smiled and seemed to think it all right as she handed her program to Harry.

"Shall we go to the ballroom?" he asked, eagerly, after jotting down his initials several times on her program. "I think the first waltz is about to commence."

The girl looked toward her father. He nodded acquiescingly. She took Harry's arm and moved away with him.

"Are you fond of dancing?" he asked, as they went toward the ballroom. He was gazing down upon her, thrilled, enthralled by her loveliness as he had been thrilled and enthralled by the blonde beauty of the song and dance girl three years before.

"Yes,' she replied, "I love dancing, though I have only danced at school. This is my first ball."

"Is it, indeed?" exclaimed Harry. "I hope you will enjoy it."

"I am sure that I shall," she declared, with enthusiasm, as they passed into the ballroom.

The musicians were playing one of the popular waltzes of the day. Harry, his heart beating violently, placed his arm about the girl's slim waist. And as they floated down the room, paradise seemed opening to them.

The evening passed like a dream to Harry Vincent. He was wildly happy and joyously animated when with Florence Stanlely, but his other partners found him dull and distrait. Many of the pretty girls present were piqued at his indifference. The infatuation of the Governor's son for the lovely Miss Stanley was too pronounced to pass unnoticed. It was very generally commented upon, and pronounced by some to be a case of love at first sight, upon his side at least.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE LUST OF REVENGE.

STANLEY had been quietly observant all the evening of his daughter and Harry Vincent. When they were seated in their carriage on their way home, he said to her:

"Do you think Harry Vincent saw a resemblance in you to the girl of the Dance Hall?'

The girl shivered. "Yes, I am sure that he did," she replied. "Several times I noticed his observing me very closely, in a puzzled, wondering sort of a way."

"Don't allow that to disturb you," said Stanley, quietly. "He is simply struck by what he considers a very remarkable resemblance, that is all."

Florence did not speak. She was gazing with dreamy eyes at the moonlit sea as they drove along the beach. Stanley, who guessed something of what she was thinking, said no more, but left her to herself.

They were not long in reaching the Bluff Villa, a handsome house of white stone, on a bluff overlooking the sea. Steps, cut out of the rock, led up from the beach to the beautiful grounds surrounding the house. There was a drive which wound around the house to the front.

A man, seated upon the steps of the veranda, arose and came forward as the carriage stopped. He opened the door before the footman had time to descend. Florence sprang out of the carriage, ignoring his proffered assistance. A slight sardonic smile passed over Stanley's lips as he noted the girl's action. The man stood waiting until Stanley descended from the carriage.

"I'll come to the library in a little while," he said to Stanley.

The latter nodded and passed on into the house. Florence was waiting for him in the hall.

"Good night, father," she said, lifting her face to his.

He touched his lips lightly to her cheek. "Good night." As she was about to turn away, he added, "Did you enjoy yourself tonight?"

She looked back at him, her lovely face radiant. "Yes, indeed, father, very, very much," she replied.

He stood watching her for a moment, as she went up the stairs, moving swiftly and gracefully, with the lights on her glittering hair. Then, with something like a sigh he turned and entered the library.

He removed his top coat, tossed it upon a chair, lighted a cigar, and stood in front of the mantel, smoking. Five minutes passed, then the door opened and David Steele entered. He wore the rough clothes of a gardener and a cap which he did not remove.

"Well?" he queried, as he came forward, his eyes on Stanley's face.

"Things appear to be going our way," Stanley replied, removing his cigar and emitting a cloud of smoke that, for the moment, obscured his face. "Young Vincent is unmistakably infatuated, his attentions to Florence were pronounced."

"Do you reckon he has any suspicions that the girl's the same he seen three years ago?" asked David.

"No, not the faintest," replied Stanley. "He saw the resemblance, I believe, but there is too wide a gulf between Mag Macks' daughter, who sang in a third-rate dance hall, and Florence Stanley, a guest of the Governor of Virginia. He regards it as a chance resemblance, very remarkable, but that is all. To believe anything else is preposterous, absurd!" and Stanley smiled with a touch of irony.

"And you reckon he's fallen in love with her?" queried David, eagerly.

"If he hasn't already, he's in a fair way to do so," replied Stanley, with conviction.

David drew a long breath of satisfaction; in his somber eyes gleamed the lust of revenge.

"I shall be glad when it's all over," said Stanley. David glanced at him quickly. "I want to be free to go my own way."

"Is it the drink you're hankerin' arter?" asked David.

Stanley shook his head.

"No, I've about conquered the craving for liquor," he replied, quietly. "It was a desperately hard struggle for the first year or so, but now, its only at long intervals that I have to fight the craving for drink. I shall try to cut out the drink even when I am again my own master."

David made no remark. It was a matter of indifference to him what Stanley did after he had served his purpose.

"I advise you to keep out of Governor Vincent's way, Dave," cautioned Stanley. "He might recognize you. They say he never forgets a face. It would not be advisable to have him know that you are in the employ of the father of the girl his son wishes to marry. You know I have always maintained that it would be best for you to stay away from here until the time comes for you to act. Florence seems to have conceived an instinctive distrust of you. You don't play your part very well. You are not a good gardener, and you do not succeed any too well in hiding your real position here. I fancy Florence has remarked this. She has an antipathy for you, as you have no doubt observed. It's instinctive, I believe. Women have wonderful intuitive perceptions."

"I don't keer nothin' 'bout how the gal feels," declared David, sullenly. "I am a-goin' to stay right heah. I couldn't rest content nowhar else. Yesterday I seen him and her drive by." A fierce, cruel light gleamed in his eyes. "The Guvner and his lady. She war a-smilin' and looked as happy as 'tis possible fo' a woman to look. She ain't changed much since she done stoled the heart and soul outen John, and then betrayed him to his death—curse her! But thar's a day comin' when she won't be lookin' so smilin' and so happy, when she won't be carryin' that head of hers so high." A chuckle, horrible to hear, left his lips. A look of repulsion flashed across Stanley's face. "The day that she finds out her son's married to Mag Macks' daughter."

He walked toward the door. Stanley gave a sigh of relief as it closed upon him. He tossed aside his half-smoked cigar and began pacing up and down the room.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, at length, dropping into a chair and passing his hand wearily over his brow. "There are times when I feel like throwing the whole thing up. I suppose I am a weak fool. The girl is nothing to me that I should feel any concern about her, any compunction in the matter. I shall get my price, that is all I should concern myself about. Fifteen thousand dollars! I would be a fool indeed to let that slip through my fingers for a mere sentiment. But sometimes, when that girl looks at me with those blue, black-lashed eyes, I feel like throwing up the whole thing, fifteen thousand dollars to boot." He laughed mirthlessly. "I wonder what has come over me? Perhaps, since I have cut out the drink, my manhood is asserting itself. I might not feel this way if that girl's eyes were not so much like hers." He sighed. "Strange that after all these years I cannot forget. Remorse gnaws at my very vitals. A neat pull of brandy and I could laugh at the pangs of remorse. Well, it will not be so very long now before I am free, free with money to gratify every desire, satisfy every craving. Away with all weakness, all irresolution! I have done with both. I shall play the game to the end."

CHAPTER XXIV.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

KATHRYN WARD was making an afternoon call upon Florence Stanley. They had had tea on the lawn, and were now strolling about the handsome grounds. During the month which had passed since the reception at the Governor's villa, Miss Ward had made a point of cultivating Florence Stanley. They had seen quite a great deal of each other.

As they strolled about the grounds they came upon a man bending over a bed of rare roses. Kathryn stopped to admire them. The man arose, touching his cap. Kathryn, in spite of her inimitable self-possession, could not quite suppress a start, as she saw his face. Twenty-four years had passed since she had seen the face of David Steele, the mountaineer, but she recognized him at once.

She looked at him as he stood with his eyes bent upon the ground. She addressed some remark to him in regard to the roses and he raised his eyes, somber, brooding, as he replied briefly. Florence gathered some of the beautiful roses and gave them to Kathryn. They passed on. David looked after them for a moment, then he continued his work.

"What a moody-looking person your gardener is," Kathryn remarked, as she daintily arranged the roses in the front of her pale gray gown.

"Yes, he is," replied Florence. "I never liked the man. He impresses me disagreeably. And I really do not think he knows much about gardening."

Kathryn smiled. "Why do you employ him?" she asked. "You should have an expert gardener for these lovely grounds."

"Oh, he is a sort of protege of father's" Florence explained. "I do not think father could be induced to part with him."

A flush crept into her cheeks. A tall, athletic young man was coming swiftly up the steps leading from the beach. It was the Governor's son.

The gardener, kneeling beside the rose bed, glanced up as the three passed him on their way to the lawn. Kathryn alone saw the glare of hatred in his eyes as they rested on the Governor's son, which changed to an expression of gloating satisfaction as he looked from him to the girl. She soon took her leave and walked very thoughtfully back to the hotel.

"I am afraid the tea is cold," said Florence, as she and Harry Vincent returned to the lawn after walking with Kathryn to the gate.

"I do not care for any tea," Harry replied, rather absently, his eyes fixed upon the girl, lovely in her pale blue gown. "Come," he said, holding out his hand.

She gave him a quick glance, then her eyes fell, she gave him her hand and allowed him to lead her away. He went to a rustic bench surrounded by trellised roses. He gently released her hand and she sat down.

"Florence," he said, standing beside her, "I wanted to bring you here, and with the roses all about you, roses pink and white like your skin, red like your lips, yellow like your hair, tell you that I love you. It was just a fancy of mine." He smiled down upon her. "I could see you in my mind, as I see you now. But to me you are fairer, sweeter than any rose. I love you so, Florence. I haven't words to tell you how much I love you."

She looked up at him wonderingly. "You care for me like that when you have only known me a month?" she murmured.

"Yes," he replied, "I loved you the first moment I saw you." He looked at her with a sudden fear darkening his eyes. "Don't you care for me, dear? Have I spoken too soon?"

"I love you," she replied, very simply. She knew that she had not learned to love him in a month, but that she had loved him ever since the night, three years before, when his dark, passionately admiring eyes had met hers in the Dance Hall. She could not tell him this, however.

Harry had seated himself on the bench beside her and took her hand in his.

"You will become my wife, dear?"

"Yes," she half whispered, and then his arms closed about her.

Later, they went in to Stanley who was reading in the library. He looked up from his book as they entered. One swift glance at their faces told him what had happened. He suppressed the sigh that arose involuntarily to his lips. He listened quietly while Harry told him of his love for Florence and asked permission to make her his wife. Having obtained that permission, Harry went away, radiantly happy, to tell his parents of his engagement. Stanley had no misgivings as to their withholding their consent to the marriage. His social position was too well established. As soon as the marriage was an accomplished fact and he had received the fifteen thousand dollars, he intended to go quietly away. He was determined not to wait for the denouement. He shrank with pain from the thought of witnessing the anguish and shame of the girl, who, believing him to be her father, had given him a daughter's affection. The mere thought of the piteous reproach he might see in her eyes almost unmanned him. He knew that she had left him after the departure of her young lover, surprised and a little pained at his coldness. He started to his feet, walked to the window, and stood looking out. An ironic smile passed over his lips at the sight of David among the flower beds.

Florence came out of the house with a pretty, light basket on her arm and a pair of shears in her hand. She stopped at a bush and began clipping the roses, which she dropped into her basket. A man came up the steps from the beach.

CHAPTER XXV.

A REVELATION.

STANLEY leaned forward, gazing at him with startled eyes. He was a middle-aged man and he wore the dress of a minister of the Gospel. Stanley stood watching him, his breath coming tensely.

The man came toward the house. He passed David, who glanced at him indifferently. He stopped when he came to where Florence stood gathering her roses. A few words were exchanged between them, then the man came on toward the house.

Stanley moved from the window and took up his stand with his back to the mantel, his eyes fixed on the door. A few minutes passed, then the door was opened by the butler.

"A gentleman to see you, sir," he said.

The visitor came forward, the butler closed the door.

"Well, Harmer, I have found you at last!" exclaimed the visitor.

"I am rather curious to learn how you did manage to find me," said Stanley, a little dryly.

"After searching for you for six months, I located you by chance," replied the visitor. "I first went to Idlewild expecting to find you there," he continued. "But I was disappointed. I saw your sister, Mrs. Wiley. She informed me that you had left Idlewild more than twenty years before, and she did not know where you were to be found." He paused, looking questioningly at Stanley, but he remained silent, offering no explanation. "I spent six months trying to locate you, but without success. A few days ago I happened to see in a society paper an account of some social function at the Shore and among the names of the guests were those of Mr. Harmer Stanley and daughter. I was not quite sure that it was you, but I determined to find out." He paused a moment, then added, "It is rather surprising to find you under such conditions."

Stanley shrugged his shoulders. "No doubt, but never mind that. I am surprised to see you wearing the dress of a clergyman. How long has it been since you entered the ministry?"

The other man looked him squarely in the eyes as he replied: "More than twenty years."

Stanley gave a convulsive start. "Is that the truth, Charles Burk?" he cried.

"Yes, it is the truth," replied Charles Burk. "I was an ordained minister of the Gospel when I read the marriage service over you and Florence Denison. But you must be aware of this yourself."

"Aware of it? What do you mean?" exclaimed Stanley.

"If you are not aware of it, why is the daughter of Florence Denison known as your daughter? I have seen and spoken with her myself."

"What makes you think that she is the daughter of—Florence Denison?"

"Because she resembles her. She has Florence's blue, black-lashed eyes and yellow hair. The first time I ever saw Florence Denison she was in the garden gathering flowers, just as I saw your daughter a little while ago. I stopped and spoke to her. When she looked at me with eyes so like Florence Denison's, I felt sure that you must have learned in some way that your marriage was not a mock marriage, but a real one."

"I have never until this moment had the faintest suspicion that the marriage between Florence Denison and myself was a real marriage," declared Stanley. "I knew you had once studied for the ministry, but I did not know that you had been ordained, or——" he paused abruptly.

"Or you would not have applied to me," supplemented Charles Burk with a mixture of sternness and contempt. "You had conceived a passion for a girl, poor,

(Continued on page twenty-three.)

THE CLAM DIGGER

Or, A CEDAR RIVER MYSTERY—By WILLIS E. LINK

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CHAPTER V.

AT THE GRUNDY HOME.

THREE miles or more up the river from Waterloo lived the Grundys. The farm which they called their own—for it was heavily mortgaged—was only a few acres in extent, and everywhere a lack of taste and thrift was plainly evident. The soil was poor, half fertilized and half cultivated. In fact the Grundys were considered a shiftless, careless family by all the denizens of the surrounding country. Under their system—or rather lack of system—it was impossible for the family to subsist upon the meager products of the farm; therefore the two men occasionally turned to clam digging. Sometimes the finding of a valuable pearl would be announced, but it was never exhibited to any one to satisfy that person's curiosity. It was stated that the pearl had been sent to Chicago or some other faraway city to be sold. In after time it was recalled by many in the community that this finding of a pearl usually coincided with a holdup or robbery of some kind in Waterloo or its suburbs.

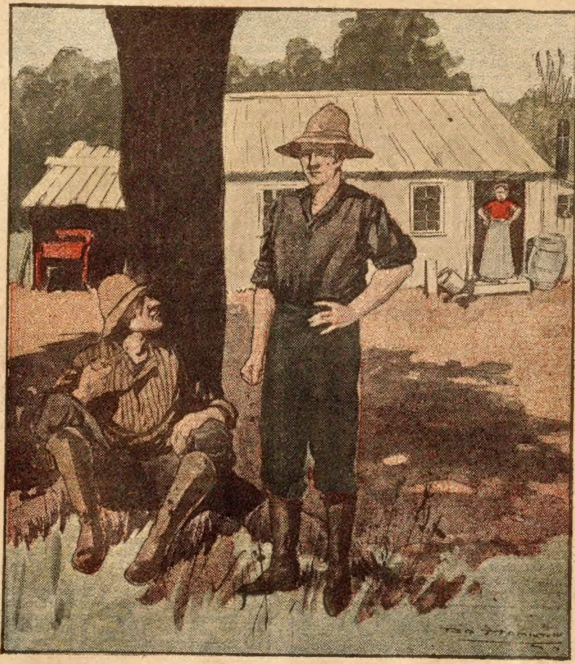
Not far from the bank of the river stood the Grundy house. Years before some one had erected a small building a story and a half high. To this in time had been added low extensions, making a sprawling and unproportioned structure. Unpainted, weather-beaten, some parts dilapidated, the weeds growing rankly in several places around, all proclaimed the character of those who called the place "home." Nature had been left to produce one redeeming feature—several trees, large and well limbed, stood near the house and upon the ground which gently sloped toward the river. The location was an ideal one for a tasty and refined home.

We already know something as to two members of the family, Bill and Sam. Jane Grundy—scarcely any one ever spoke of her as Mrs. Grundy—was a tall, powerfully built woman, mannish in appearance and action. Never tastefully dressed, at home her attire was particularly slouchy and ill-fitting, serving to intensify the angular and ungraceful lines of the figure. A shock of brick-red hair, an extremely freckled face, a wide, big mouth, and pale gray "piggy" eyes made an assemblage of features homely as one seldom beholds. One "tongue lashing" from her was all that a person ever cared to experience, for along this line she was simply unapproachable. It was generally understood that she "ruled the roost" in the family. Bill and Sam were known as ugly to tackle, and because of this fact some men wondered how the husband and son could submit to such a state of things at home. Once running afoul of Jane Grundy, these men never again wondered about this.

Bessie Older—she was generally known as Bessie Grundy—was the remaining member of the household. She had come into the family several years before as the orphan child of Bill's dead sister, and always regretted the day when the fates were so unkind to her. In spite of her hard life and uncongenial surroundings, she had grown into a plump, dark-haired and dark-eyed beauty. Many times she had debated in her mind the question of fleeing from this hell on earth, but always failed to muster enough courage to take the step. The blood-curdling threats of Jane Grundy as to what would happen if she ever should try to escape from her bondage made her shiver with apprehension, for well she knew these were no idle words coming from the terrible woman. Sometimes she had tried to nerve herself to ask the law to protect her, but ignorance of such matters and her fear held her back. So she had grown to be nearly eighteen, and most of her happy hours had been passed in the country schoolhouse a mile away, which she was allowed to attend for a few terms—thanks to the pressure of the neighbors.

Sam had always been quarrelsome and tyrannical with Bessie. Perhaps because of his subjection to his mother, he vented his ill temper upon the poor girl. But lately she had realized a decided change. He no longer was the vile ruffian against whom she had fairly to fight to retain her self-respect. His quarrelsome moods ceased, and he would even help her at some of her duties. Bessie felt pleased over this, although Mrs. Grundy became, if possible, more vindictive.

The day came when, amazed, Bessie was awakened to the truth. Sam was in love with her, as much as was possible for such a nature to love.



"Don't know whether she's alive?"

Jane Grundy had gone into the city, a trip she did not take very frequently. Bessie was left to work at a number of designated tasks. Bill, with an old team, was plowing some corn that badly needed cultivating. After his mother left, Sam came in and proceeded to assist Bessie with her duties. It was then that the girl was astonished with a declaration of love and a proposal to run off and get married.

"But I am your cousin," Bessie objected.

"Lots of cousins marry," responded Sam.

"Your mother," and father also, she knew this really meant, "will object."

"It will do them little good after we are married, and if they do raise the devil, I can take care of you without their help," Sam spoke easily.

"How?" Bessie was prolonging the conversation to gain time in order to gather her scattered ideas.

"You needn't worry, for I have things all fixed," Sam spoke positively. "You don't have to live here any longer, but we will have a nice house down in the city." There was a triumphant ring in his voice.

This declaration seemed preposterous to Bessie, for she well knew the Grundy finances were at a low ebb. It was a simple scheme to hoodwink her into an acceptance of his suit. Then some other thought must have come into her mind, for suddenly a look of comprehension came into her eyes while she dropped into a chair. It seemed to require an extreme effort to speak.

"Your folks have other plans for you—and me," she added, as an afterthought.

"Don't I know all about this?" he stormed. "Mam expects you to stay with her and slave until one of you dies. They want me to marry Ella Hamburg. She's crazy to marry somebody, so they say, and mam has made her think she can get me. I don't care if a farm does go with her, I don't want her." Sam brought his fist down savagely upon the old kitchen table near which he was standing.

"I must think it over, Sam," Bessie almost sobbed as she rose to her feet.

"How long do you want?"

"Give me until tomorrow."

"All right, but I shall not wait a day longer. Give me a kiss to bind the bargain."

Sam had been edging nearer to her every second, and as he maneuvered she had stepped back until she was in a corner of the kitchen. As he slipped his arm around her waist, a deathly pallor came into her face. At this moment the pump handle just outside the window began to creak.

"Darn it! There is pap," Sam muttered in disgust and disappointment. "I hope he didn't see or hear what has been going on, for if he did they will raise the devil." Bessie improved the moment and slipped up the narrow stairway to her room in the attic.

"Sam, go and get the team." Bill was now at the door and spoke softly. "We must get ready for the work we have to do tonight."

That night was the one in which Pearl Ames so suddenly disappeared.

It was about nine o'clock the next morning, and Bill was sprawled under one of the trees not far from the river bank. He was evidently watching for some one, and as Sam appeared some distance away, the loafer assumed an upright position and impatiently waited.

"All right, pap," encouragingly announced Sam as he drew near.

"Did she go over all right?" Bill almost whispered the question.

"Fine!" Sam emphatically declared. "They are strung all along the river to find the body," he continued, and a chuckle of satisfaction issued from his thick lips.

"We won't laugh just yet—perhaps you won't in a few minutes," stated Bill. "I hope we will have ten thousand dollars soon, and, of course, you will get a slice. But I want to take the most of it and go away up into Canada. If you would marry Ella Hamburg, you could have that farm sold and go along, and then be as well fixed as mam and I would be."

"Let's quit that talk," Sam ejaculated impatiently, "for I wouldn't have the fool if she had two farms."

"Perhaps you will never have the chance, for I heard this morning she has gone away on a visit—or something," said Bill, as he leaned back against the tree.

"Glad of it," Sam responded indifferently.

"Something else has happened." Bill now straightened himself and looked keenly at his son. The latter gazed wonderingly at his father.

"Bessie has run away."

Sam flinched as if some one had struck him. He staggered to the tree and braced himself against it, while he gazed at his father in blank amazement.

"She didn't come down this morning, so mam went to her room. It was plain that she had cleaned out," Bill explained.

Without a word, Sam turned and started toward the house.

"If Sam knew what I have done, he would kill me," muttered the father. "I hope Ella Hamburg will soon be back and Sam will make up with her; then we can all go to Canada."

"I'll find her if I have to go into hell," hissed Sam, as he neared the house.

As he entered the door, his mother began to pour out a torrent of words, but he paid no attention to this. He mounted the narrow stairway and entered his room—a low, small affair. He had scarcely stepped inside when he stopped as if paralyzed. He opened his mouth to speak, but a groan came instead. The next moment he rushed against the door of the other bedroom of the attic. It was Bessie's, but without ceremony Sam entered. Giving one glance, he plunged down the stairway and into the bedchamber of his parents. One glance there and he flew from the house. Astonished at her son's actions, the mother was now silent.

With long, rapid strides Sam hurried toward the city. The rest of the day he was among those who searched for the body of Pearl Ames.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CLAM DIGGER.

AFTER the experiences of such an awful day as he had passed, it is no wonder that Nathan did not rest well in the rude bunk occupying one corner of the cabin. Indeed, several times during the night he arose and walked the floor as extensively as his small quarters would permit. Sometimes he would stop and listen for the voice he had heard at the beginning of the hours of darkness. As no voice came to him, he would mentally castigate himself for his simplicity and resume his monotonous tread. Exhausted and despairing, he would throw himself upon his bed to roll and tumble about for the next hour. The eastern sky was beginning to brighten when he sank into a broken and troubled slumber. As the sun shone into a small window, throwing a bright streak across the floor, he awoke.

There was an instant remembrance of the events of the preceding day. For some moments Nathan fought desperately to cast this memory from him, but with no avail. He felt so weak and hopeless as he lay and gazed toward the streak of sunlight upon the floor. Perhaps a half-hour passed, for the streak was crawling toward the window as the sun mounted higher, when he became conscious of a bit of crumpled paper lying directly in the narrowing strip of sunlight. It was something he had cast aside, but when? And what was it? He had not noticed it the evening before, but that was not remarkable. Bits of paper often lay upon the floor and were unnoticed. It was queer how curious he was about that scrap of crumpled paper. Half-ashamed of himself because of this attention to such a trifle, he arose and picked up the object of his curiosity. He unfolded the paper and an expression of wonder and perplexity came into his face. In a strange handwriting, two or three lines were written in pencil:

"Your Pearls are not far away. Watch, think, be careful. You may get into awful trouble."

There was no signature. Who was the writer? He scanned the words closely, but could not determine the sex. The letters were big and sprawling, but there were strokes showing a woman's characteristics. As these lines seemed to be smoother and more natural, he decided the probabilities were in favor of the gentler sex. Then who could she be? He was again walking the cabin floor.

His "Pearls" were not far away. He had lost two pearls, each of a different nature, and the writer knew. Probably this was written before Pearl—the girl he loved so dearly—was cast adrift in the boat. Where was his precious darling when this note was written? Sometimes an intangible fear had possessed his heart, but now he fully comprehended a possibility. Perhaps human demons had captured her and she had fought a battle for that which a true woman holds most dear in life. What might have occurred near this very cabin? When did she give up her life? Who placed her in his own boat? He felt his brain would burst with so many agonizing, unanswered questions. The writer must know so much about the mysteries. Why was she keeping under cover? Then why should she warn him? She knew about the stolen pearl. This information must in some way have been given or betrayed by the thief. Why was the writer shielding this person?

The missive must have lain on the floor all the day before. He now had a faint remembrance of seeing the paper when he arrived at the cabin. He had struck it with his foot as he entered the door, and had felt an inclination to pick up the untidy object, but other thoughts had distracted his attention.

Should he show the note to the police? Perhaps if he did, it would hinder in the solution of the mysteries. Detectives or strangers in the neighborhood would be watched by the guilty parties, whoever they were. The writer could have communicated with the police station—why didn't she? Probably she was in some difficult and trying situation—perhaps a dangerous one. She intimated that danger faced him. How, and from what source? Somewhere in the neighborhood shrewd and heartless criminals were concealed. Before informing the police, he would get hold of some definite facts. He would settle down and "watch" and from all that came to his attention he would try to "think" to some advantage. Thus he might find the stolen pearl, and above everything else, bring to justice the murderers of Pearl Ames.

He still was not hungry, so it took but a few minutes to dispatch a light breakfast. Then he repaired to the city. There was nothing new to learn. Searchers had found nothing further in the Cedar, although it was falling fast. More to be in action than anything else, Nathan walked several miles down the river. Sam Grundy was still active in his search up and down the river. This struck Nathan as peculiar, to say the least.

A faint suspicion—a very faint one—was in his mind that in some way Sam Grundy was implicated in the mystery of Pearl's disappearance. He had no reason to think this, he told himself, only that the Grundy family had such a poor reputation, and that they lived in the same neighborhood where the girl was probably murdered. But were not others living in the same community—himself, for instance! It was a question of reputation only. When it came to this, there were others within a two-mile circle of his cabin who might, perhaps, as justly be suspected. Anyhow, if Sam was guilty, would he be searching for his victim? This did not look reasonable—not at all in accord with human nature and experience. He might do this to ward off suspicion. But who would suspect him? Surely no one had. If this was his game—if he was that shrewd—he would know it would be better to stay unconcernedly at home. It was some sudden emotion—some queer trait—on Sam's part that was impelling him to be so zealous in this quest.

After leaving the river, Nathan remembered that he had not had an opportunity to speak to Sam. Did the latter manage to avoid a meeting?

Acceding to their importunities, Nathan remained with the Lewises for nearly a week. The Cedar fell fast and was getting almost to its normal stage. The clam digger determined to return to his cabin and resume his occupation. He no longer had the same incentive to stir him to action, but there was a motive strong within him. It was there he could better "watch," and being alone so much, he could better "think." Perhaps dangers would surround him, but he would trust in Providence as to the outcome.

That night in his cabin a strange dream came to him. He was walking by the Cedar with Pearl by his side. How she clung to his arm! Then she let go and smiled joyfully into his eyes.

"I must go after your lost pearl," she said, "and some day I shall bring it back to you. Be brave until I return."

She stepped to the water's edge and walked out into the stream until she disappeared beneath the surface. He tried to follow, but could not. Then he awoke, but it was hours before sleep once more came to him.

The next day was taken up with arranging the details necessary to resume his work at clam digging. That night he dreamed a second time.

Again Pearl was clinging to his side. Again she smiled into his eyes as she released her hold and stepped away.

"I must leave you for a little while," she said, "so that wrong will run its course and the transgressor be punished. Be brave until I return."

Through the trees and over the fields she walked until she disappeared from his sight. He seemed turned to stone and could not follow. He awoke and lay with wide open eyes until morning was near at hand.

Nathan was no believer in dreams or omens. His was an intensely practical and matter-of-fact mind, so these visions had no great significance to him. We will not say they should have had—we are noncommittal, as we are not discussing the philosophy of his dreams. Still, in spite of his nature, these pictures of his sleep gave him a strange comfort.

The next day he began his work again as a clam digger. Seeking a place where the water was not too deep, he anchored his boat with a small weight. He would wade around in the water, which might be waist deep, and with a "clam hoe"—made with bent prongs—rake over the mud at the bottom of the river. When a clam was found, it was thrown into the boat. Sometimes a clam was discovered under foot. When a load was secured, or toward the latter part of the day, the clams were taken to land, where they were cut and broken open. Sometimes a pearl of more or less value would be found. The shells were saved, and at the close of the season in the fall, shipped to a factory to be transformed into buttons. The unfortunate mollusk possessing the bivalve home, not having any value as food, was thrown away as refuse.

All day long Nathan studied as he labored. He made up his mind to a course of action. He determined to visit all the homes, for a considerable distance around. He had never been sociable in this way, as he had plenty of other matters to occupy his time and attention. Now there was a special object. He would observe the people and their surroundings, and perhaps something would develop into a clew of importance. Naturally, being the nearest, if for no other reason, he decided to visit the Grundys first. Stopping work early, he walked over to these neighbors.

Bill was sitting under a tree smoking a corncob pipe. He glanced keenly at Nathan as the latter approached.

"I have been very negligent in getting around to get acquainted with my neighbors," the visitor remarked, after he had greeted the smoker.

"Well, we have not called upon you as we might, so you needn't worry," was the curt reply.

"Your family are well, I presume," Nathan remarked as he leaned against the tree, for no chair had been proffered.

"I suppose so," Bill responded. "Sam is down to the city, where he puts in the most of his time lately. Bessie cleared out one night not long ago, so I don't know whether she is dead or alive."

Nathan started slightly at this information. He had noticed Bessie as she passed his cabin on her way to school, and in time had become quite well acquainted with the girl. In some ways she was like Pearl—in form and figure, with dark hair and eyes. He knew many would consider Bessie as pretty as Pearl, especially if she could be dressed as becomingly.

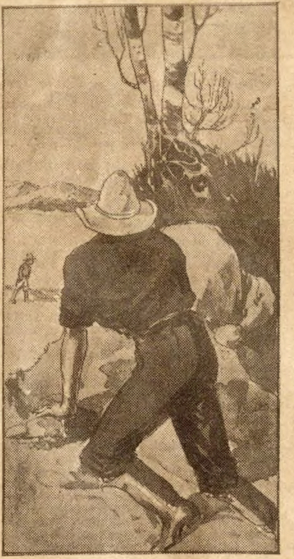
"When did she leave?" inquired Nathan.

"Several nights ago—the night Pearl Ames went down the river."

From the night of Bessie's disappearance, Bill had taken special pains to inform everybody, so he did not hesitate in answering Nathan.

"Bill, come in," Mrs. Grundy shouted from the doorway at this instant. She had made no effort to speak to the visitor. Without inviting the caller in or to remain, Bill entered the house.

Nathan scarcely noticed the terrible rudeness of the Grundys. He was asking himself the question, Did Bessie write that note? As he was walking away from the weather-beaten old domicile, something came to his ears. It seemed impossible to tell whether the sound came from the earth or sky—it surely was not from the gloomy old building. He could not distinguish the words, but it seemed as if the identical ones came into his mind:



Still active in his search.

"Other refuge have I none,
  Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, oh leave me not alone,
  Still support and comfort me."

Faint and far away, still strangely close at hand, the song came to him. He stood in awe and wonder. It was surely Pearl's voice. He believed he would know her faintest tones from even millions of others. It must be she was again speaking to him from the other world. Strange! Strange!

CHAPTER VII.

HENRY AMES.

WHEN Henry Ames returned to St. Paul from Oelwein, he made a report to his uncle. The plotter realized it would not do to color his report too severely, but he cunningly contrived to leave the impression that he was charitably shielding the Waterloo family. Pearl was not well, he said, and her mother did not wish to leave her until she was in better health, then both would go to St. Paul. Mr. Ames had a big business deal on hand, and would visit his brother as soon as he possibly could find the time. He, Henry, somehow could not bring them to realize the gravity of their relative's situation. Before many days they undoubtedly would be on hand. Meanwhile letters would be frequently sent to them.

The old man had been confined to his bed for some time, and it was plain to be seen he was constantly growing weaker. Each day, after Henry's return, was one of disappointment. The brother did not come—not even a letter from him. The invalid began to think he realized the situation—his brother and family were indifferent as to his condition. Tears poured down the old man's cheeks as he came to this conclusion, while apparently deeply affected, the plotter turned away with his handkerchief to his eyes. After a few moments the tears ceased and a hard expression came into the emaciated face.

The dying man—for he sensed that only a few hours remained—had decided to change his will. It surely seemed that Henry had reformed and now would make a man of himself. It would not be just to show a lack of appreciation after the no doubt severe struggle his nephew had experienced in overcoming appetite and temptation. The Waterloo relatives were too sure of the legacy to Pearl. Appreciation would be shown and a blow struck while there was yet time, and the face grew harder at the thought.

"Henry, get my lawyer here at once," commanded his uncle.

Henry complied, secretly wondering what was in the old man's mind. The lawyer was alone with his client for an hour. The physician and the nurse were called in to attach their signatures to some document, and Henry decided that a new will had been drawn. Probably he was favored more than he had been in the preceding will. But there might be stipulations very distasteful to him. On the whole, the way he had the situation in hand, he would rather take his chances as he had planned. He began to feel uneasy as he thought of possible complications.

The next evening Thomas Ames breathed his last. After the interview with his lawyer the old man sank rapidly, but the end was peaceful. It was then that Henry sent a message to the Ames family at Waterloo. In the morning, an answer was delivered.

"Gosh! muttered the plotter, "Bill has been devilishly prompt. I don't know if this is O. K. or not," he continued to soliloquize, "but I am glad these folks will not be around here to ask a lot of questions."

The next day Thomas Ames was laid to his eternal rest. The following morning the lawyer called Henry Ames into his office and informed him of the contents of the last will of his Uncle Tom. The information was anything but satisfactory to the crafty schemer.

The stipulations of the old will had been practically reversed. The property was to be converted into certain bonds and these securities held by a well-known bank in St. Paul. The yearly interest was all to go to Henry Ames for ten years, then the principal also—under certain conditions. Perhaps a shade of doubt was in the mind of Thomas Ames as to his nephew's real reformation, so a proviso was inserted to force correct conduct in the future. The yearly income immediately ceased and all right to the principal was forever lost in case the legatee was convicted of a crime or felony. In such a case, or in case of his death, the bonds became the property of Pearl Ames without any restriction.

The perturbed young man excused himself and soon was in the privacy of his own room. There he engaged in a dissatisfied rumination. The removal of Pearl Ames was now a useless piece of work. He was tied up with an income not at all compatible with his desires. That proviso was an infernal nuisance. When drunk or tempted, an infraction of some statute of the State might occur. With plenty of money he could wriggle out of the toils in some way. Now he must look out and go slow. And there was a past he might be called upon to reckon with. His white slave business, for instance. Still this was hardly likely, as his victims had dropped out of sight—probably into the potter's field; The Grundys would not betray him, for this would implicate themselves. In no other direction could he be convicted of the plot against Pearl Ames.

With a profane and impatient exclamation he dismissed his worries from his mind. Jumping to his feet, he left the room. He soon was in a saloon where he partook of a "bracer," and for the next few days was constantly more or less under the influence of liquor. Then he received a letter from Bill Grundy.

"I might as well have it out first as last," he mumbled, after reading the letter. Therefore the next day saw him in Marshalltown, a city about fifty miles southwest from Waterloo. He had been in the city before and had patronized a restaurant within a block from the depot.

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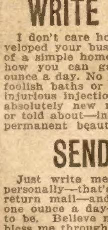

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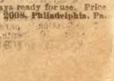

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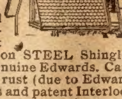

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Thither he bent his steps after alighting from the train.

"Hello, Henry Ames! Where have you been for the last year?" greeted the proprietor, a fat, jolly-appearing man.

A waitress just leaving the room nearly dropped her tray at this instant. Neither of the men noticed this carelessness, however, as they shook hands. The girl made a pretense of arranging the articles upon her tray, but she was listening to the conversation between the two men.

"Oh, at home in St. Paul," she heard the reply. She picked up the tray from a table and left the room, but upon her undeniably pretty face was a peculiar expression a physiognomist would find it hard to interpret.

"I suppose you want breakfast," remarked the proprietor, after he and the St. Paul man had finished their greeting.

"Sure! Set me out the best you have."

The morning rush was over, and only a couple of patrons sat at other tables. Choosing a third, Henry seated himself, and a minute afterward the pretty waitress came forward to get his order. He always made it a point to stare at the girls in a hotel or restaurant, with varying results noticeable in the one so observed, and this time he made no exception to his rule. The girl did not show any embarrassment or resentment at his inspection, nor was there any pretense or forwardness in her appearance. It seemed to him as if she had an air of being acquainted. At least that was the nearest description he could give to the impression he received.

"Gosh! She's pretty—just my style," he mentally ejaculated. As the meal progressed, he had a vague idea that she would like to talk with him, but not in the way other waitresses had "joshed" so coarsely at the least encouragement. It was strange, but he felt a queer reserve—queer for him.

"Will you have some more coffee, Mr. Ames?" asked the girl, when he set down his empty cup. He assented, but glanced at her in some surprise.

"Oh, I heard the boss call you by this name," she said, as if in answer to his look, and a smile came over her face.

"You are quite observing," stated Henry, as he handed her the cup and saucer.

"It pays to be that way," she sagely observed, as she stepped to the coffee urn.

"You know my name; I ought to know yours," Henry said insinuatingly, as the cup of coffee was set by his plate.

"Bettie Smith," promptly was given.

"A charming name and a charming person."

For the first time in his life Henry felt ashamed of this kind of remark. He had said something like this before to some restaurant girl when he did not mean it, but now he really was sincere.

This petite brunette, with her clear, healthy complexion, was no hothouse product or of crowded tenements, but the creature of the free and uncontaminated breeze of the wildwood—so he placed her.

"I am not posted enough in the ways of the world to know how to take such rank flattery," said the girl quietly, "but I am only a waitress, anyhow," she finished, with a laugh of a nature too puzzling for Henry to analyze.

"But you are as good as any girl in the city—no man need be ashamed of you for a sister, sweetheart, or wife," earnestly protested the man against the implied lowliness of position, and he was surprised at himself for believing every word he said.

"Well, I do not occupy any of these positions to anybody, so it doesn't matter," and now the laugh was tinged with a shade of sadness.

"If I stay in the city a few days, I shall try for one of these positions," Henry spoke meaningly.

"Thank you," replied Bettie, sarcastically.

"Oh, I mean it." He placed his napkin on the table preparatory to rising. There was an incomprehensible expression in the girl's face.

"Well, we'll see," she said lightly.

"Thank you." He had risen from the chair.

"Anyhow, I feel sorry for you." With a little catch in her voice—perhaps it was nervousness—she continued: "You must feel very sad to lose your cousin as you did at Waterloo."

With a startled exclamation, the man dropped back into the chair.

CHAPTER VIII.

WORKER SEEKS SYMPATHY.

NATHAN, we remember, had started for his cabin after his ungracious reception at the Grundy home. He walked on slowly with a sensation of being in a land of dreams. The voice of his lost sweetheart in the familiar old melody seemed so real, but he felt it must be a hallucination. He rebelled at accepting this explanation of the mystery. She surely had called his name a few nights before, and now he had heard her voice again. Perhaps the two dreams did mean something. Perhaps, while she was in the great unknown realm, she was still near him and wished to comfort him. He caught himself looking up, half expecting to see her. At that he mentally shook himself vigorously and quickened his steps.

"It isn't safe to try and fathom some things," he muttered.

That night what slumber came to him was free from dreams. In the morning just as he was preparing to begin his day's work, a young man sauntered up and introduced himself as John Worker. Nathan had casually noticed him a few times before, and knew he lived with his widowed mother two miles or so out in the country.

"Pardon me, but I want to talk a while, if I do not intrude," said the visitor.

"Not at all; my time is entirely at your service," cordially responded Nathan. The two walked to a large tree and sat down in its shade.

"I have talked to mother until I guess she is tired of listening to me," young Worker began. "Because you have met with a great loss, I feel we may sympathize with each other, although your troubles are far worse than mine. Your loved one is forever out of your reach. There is a chance I may find mine. Because you are the nearest neighbor to her former home is another reason why I wish to consult with you." John paused and glanced significantly in the direction of the old dwelling not far away.

"You mean the Grundys, and Miss Bessie is the person in whom you are particularly interested?"

"Precisely." John slightly flushed at this admission, but in a moment recovered from his embarrassment. Looking his companion frankly in the face, the speaker continued:

"You probably comprehend what her life has been there, and have heard that she has fled from this almost hourly torment. Her environment has been terrible. Because of this, it need not be wondered at if her manners and moral point of view are not as correct as we might wish—the wonder is, really, that she is such a refined and true girl, as I know her to be. You have heard of her leaving the Grundy home?"

Nathan nodded.

"I know Bill takes pains to tell everyboby. Why, I don't comprehend. Sometimes I wonder if she is shut up in that old house or they have her confined in some other place. I don't see what suddenly arose to drive her to action. I know she often wanted to get away, but they have tyrannized so long over her that she did not have the courage. What turned up to nerve her to action? Why hasn't she dropped me a single line?" By this time John was upon his feet and passing back and forth beneath the tree.

Nathan started to speak, but closed his lips. For the first time the thought came into his mind that the writer of the note he found upon his cabin floor was Bessie. She probably stuck it beneath the door the night she left. If so, then the Grundys knew nothing as to her whereabouts. Why did she leave the note? Why should she specially warn him? Supposing it was she who stole his pearl! Then she might try to throw suspicion upon some one else. While they were not mentioned, she probably knew the Grundys—thanks to their record—would be the first to be suspected. If she had the pearl, she would not wish to give any one, not even John, any inkling as to her location. If she wrote the note, what did she mean by "Pearls?" Could she throw any light upon the mystery surrounding Pearl Ames? He could show John the warning missive and learn if Bessie was the author—for he undoubtedly knew her writing. But no, he was not prepared just yet to make too much of a confidant of this new acquaintance. It might result in complications. He would wait and decide later.

"Can you suggest a course of action?" John stopped and gazed with a troubled face at Nathan.

"Not yet," was the reply, "but can you tell me how you managed to conduct your courtship unknown to the Grundys?"

"I do not know whether I can call it a courtship or not," John replied, in a meditating way, as he gazed at the river close by. "I met her accidentally the first two or three times. Then I met her out under the trees away from her slave pen, as I called it. I was getting tired of this kind of doings when she ran away. I wanted to have things open and above board. Still it would have been worse for Bessie, and this thought made me hold back as I did. We were not engaged—I had not told her I loved her. I knew I loved her all right and was trying to plan just how to manage affairs—now this has happened. I know now that I love her far more than I realized, but she evidently does not care very much about me." John surely looked despondent.

"I think she does care, or she would not have run the risk—you know it was one when you think of Jane Grundy—of meeting you as she did," consoled Nathan. "She has been gone only a few days, really, but it seems long to you—they surely have been to me. Remember Bessie has some maidenly reserve about being in a hurry to write to a fellow who may have just been idly flirting with her, for all she knows—you know you kept your heart hid from her. In a few

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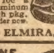

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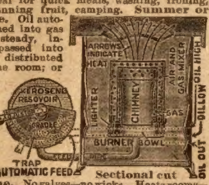

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days drop around again, if you are still in the dark. By that time I may have noticed something and have some ideas formulated in my mind."

"Thank you. Before I leave I wish to express my deep sympathy for you in your trouble. I know how I would feel if the boat had held Bessie that morning." Honest tears came into the speaker's eyes.

Nathan's eyes were also wet as he arose to his feet. He could not say a word, but extended his hand. In that clasp began a friendship never to be broken. Silently the two separated.

Nathan worked poorly that day. His thoughts were too intensely fixed upon other things and not upon the work of his hands. Disgusted with himself, but really worn out with the strain of the past few days, he quit his labor long before sunset. There was no attempt at a call, as he had planned for every afternoon. John's visit had injected new lines of thought, and they all centered around Bessie.

After all, need he suspect the tried, harassed girl? There was another point of view. Perhaps she left the Grundy home that night to escape a terrible thraldom. She knew some facts, but for some unknown reason could not give this information to him or any one else. She had gone as far as she could in warning him. After doing so—here was a new idea—perhaps the Grundys thwarted her intended escape and she was now a prisoner. John's suggestion that she might be held in the old dwelling, after all, was not unreasonable. It was queer that the family was so free in informing all of Bessie's runaway. Perhaps they knew their reputation was such that suspicion would be aroused at the girl's absence, and this method was adopted to quiet an investigation. Their course might be adopted whether Bessie really escaped or was held a prisoner.

Thus Nathan's mind ran in a channel connected with the missing Bessie. When he realized this, he felt that he was disloyal to Pearl in so forgetting the mystery connected with her disappearance. Still he could not condemn himself, for somewhere in the chambers of his mind dwelt the impression that he was following a trail leading to the goal he sought. Let us say this was an intuition—something that sometimes comes to us when we are unable to use our reasoning powers.

Other disquieting thoughts came. Every day he had a report of the search in the Cedar. The river was down almost to its normal stage. Mr. Ames was unsparing of time and money in conducting the work of dragging the river for miles below the city. Still no trace of the body. Nathan believed many would wonder why he was not engaged in this search. He felt he must be alone—it was absolutely necessary. An obsession held him that his place was at his cabin. Besides this, if he should be on hand when his loved one was dragged to the shore, his mind would give way at the awful sight his eyes would behold. No, no matter what any one thought, he would take no chances for such an hour of horror.

And what possessed Sam Grundy? He was conducting an independent search by himself. Every day he was along the river banks or out in the water. A perplexing wonder filled Nathan's mind as he heard of Sam's persistency.

It was nearly midnight, and Nathan was tossing restlessly upon his couch. Several times during the night he had arisen and walked the floor; now he was at this again. He paused to look out of the small window. The waning moon had not yet risen, but the darkness was relieved by the twinkling stars. He stood and vacantly gazed at the shadows. Along the road three persons stepped into the clearer light. Nathan could not see distinctly, but he judged them to be men. This was nothing particularly strange, but the next moment their actions seemed of a suspicious nature. They glided into a deep shadow for the evident purpose of concealing themselves.

This strange story leads to very extraordinary situations and dramatic episodes. The reader will find it eminently worth reading to the end. Next week's Ledger will contain further chapters of it. The surest way to get the Ledger is to subscribe for it and have it come to your home regularly. Today is a good time to attend to this.

⁂

REBELLION.

"I'm so glad you've come," said Mrs. Milburn, thrusting a weeping baby into her husband's arms the moment his overcoat was off. "She's a little fretful, but she'll be all right with you. It's wonderful how she crows and sings when you dance around with her."

Milburn looked into the face of his grandchild with a mock severity that did not appear to frighten her, for the little frowning crinkles smoothed into a smile. When he threw her up to his shoulder with a tender semblance of roughness she cooed with delight.

"Isn't she just the sweetest thing you ever saw?" cried the grandmother.

"Oh, I don't know, Alice. There have been others. I do have a fellow feeling for her, though, because she's bald." Milburn pulled the infant down from his shoulder and kissed the spot where the soft fuzzy curls had worn off on the pillow. "But why am I elected nurse girl? I intended to write a brief tonight." He proffered the baby to his wife.

"I can't take her now. I've got something to do in the kitchen."

"What have you got to do in the kitchen? I thought Manda was capable of getting up dinner unassisted."

"Well, Manda isn't here. I let her go over to Ethel's."

"You don't mean to say that Ethel is without a girl again?"

"No, but she's having a little dinner tonight, and her maid is so incompetent that I sent Manda out to manage things. She'll be a great help to Ethel."

"Sometimes I wonder if Ethel will ever learn to manage her own housekeeping," growled Ethel's father. "How did we happen to be honored by a visit from Laura's baby? Is Laura giving a party, too?"

"No. Any one would think you were cross who didn't know that you simply adore that baby."

"Even that granted, I have yet other aims and ambitions in life than nurse-girling. I think I remarked that I had a brief to write this evening."

"Well, you can do it after dinner. Tom wanted Laura to dine with him downtown, so she brought baby here and went down early to do some shopping. Poor Laura doesn't get out very often."

"No, that's so. This is only the third time this week that her baby has been quartered on us."

"Well, this is the end of the week, and anyway I think it's a joy to have such a perfect little darling come to visit us. You know you think so, too!"

"Maybe I do, but as I tried to explain, I have a little matter of my own on hand."

Mrs. Milburn, however, had gone to the kitchen and there was nothing for Milburn to do but establish the baby among the pillows on the couch while he made his toilet in as entertaining a manner as he could invent. He brushed his hair with free flourishes that won gurgles from the small onlooker, and he was rewarded by applause when he removed his shoes with kicks that sent them flying across the floor. When Mrs. Milburn came to say that dinner was ready she found the baby in a state of hilarity.

"You manage her better than any one else," she declared.

"In other words, I'm the biggest monkey in the family." Milburn endeavored not to look proud.

"I'll take her now while you go down and look at the furnace. I think the fire needs a little coal before dinner."

"Where's Dagget? What do we keep a houseman for? Stoking isn't my——"

"Now, you know you don't mind fixing the fire once in a while. I let Dagget go out to Nell's. She telephoned me this morning that the paper hangers had left her house in a fearful state and it's so hard to get any one in the suburbs to do cleaning that I just sent Dagget out. I knew that he would be a great comfort to Nell."

"Oh, no doubt," remarked Milburn.

After dinner when Milburn, with the baby in his arms, was dancing his own version of the tango in the kitchen while his wife washed the dishes, the telephone rang.

"I'll keep her while you answer," said Mrs. Milburn. When he returned, his peculiar expression made her ask, "Who was it?"

"Laura called up to know if the baby was good. She said Tom had asked her to go to the theater, and would we mind keeping the baby. Of course I said the pleasure was all ours, and then she said she wouldn't like to take the baby out in the middle of the night, and the only thing the baby would need was a bottle at three o'clock in the morning. Just a little bottle at three a. m., my dear. That's all."

"You needn't be so sarcastic. That won't be any bother at all. I shall have it on the radiator keeping warm and——"

"Even if it should be a bother, we won't mind, for it will be a kind of farewell celebration. Tomorrow we move to a hotel."

"Move to a hotel! Why, what can we do with the house?"

"Rent it, I suppose. Anyway we won't run it any longer as a help-supplying depot and emergency station."

"Why?"

"I mean it, my dear. Tomorrow we'll make a dash for freedom."

⁂

On His Dignity.

The bartender grasped the man next the stove by the shoulder and shook him until he was awake.

"Here, Zeph," he told him, "you'd better go out and get some fresh air. It'll do you good."

Zeph merely grunted drunkenly and huddled back in his chair. The bartender tried it again, with like result.

"You won't get out, won't you?" he roared angrily. Seizing the unfortunate Zeph by the collar and the seat of the trousers, he escorted him forcibly to the alley. "Get out there in the air and brace up," was his parting advice.

"Y' kin put me out if y' like, but"—Zeph straightened up with drunken dignity—"ye can't make me take no air, durn ye!"

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Beyond the Law

Or, Their Deeper Right—By E. W. Bateman

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Begun in No. 2, January 10. Subscriptions can begin with that issue, or back copies can be obtained from news stands, our agents, or by mail from the office of publication.

CHAPTER VII.

HAD we sought the town over, we could not have found a place more suited to the needs we had. I knew it by reputation, which was unsavory to a degree. A little scramble there attracted no attention. Only a killing brought the police.

We had scarcely seated ourselves when there were other steps upon the stairs. It was followed by a soft padding that I had learned to know well. I crouched low in my seat, while my companion drew himself forward over the table. There was a pause before the door, then the secretary stepped over the threshold alone.

He started with surprise at seeing me, but it was but a moment. He came in and sat down, facing my companion with his oily smile that was distinctly aggravating to me.

They looked at each other long over the table, the pair who were to do the talking, and then began speaking. For a while I listened to what they said, but only occasionally did a Spanish word creep in. They were using an Indian lingo that I had never heard. I rose and peeped out of the door. Squatting before it, and looking more like beasts than ever, were his two guards.

For some moments the talk ran on smoothly, and then with a quick turn they spoke sharply in Spanish. I listened quickly and they were speaking of a woman. The secretary was eager, pleading, the man opposite driving a bargain in a slow, bantering tone. I caught a name—they were bargaining over a woman—and I knew her.

It struck me like a knife. In that flash of thought all I had known and done with her sprang before me, and I knew I loved her. These wretches, dust to her feet, were trading her off—she a woman God had made for me, though I had just scorned her. All the might of the ages was in me, with a madness that flamed in every inch of me. I roared just once. Through my upraised chair I saw a small package fly upon the table, and the next instant I struck the secretary on the head.

It brought bedlam. The two devils outside sprang through the door, their two queer clubs brandished on high, their heads swinging from side to side like mad dogs. My chair was broken, but I sprang for one before he could even strike. My companion, laughing not unlike a hyena, drew a dagger from his shirt, with a lightning motion, and danced around the other, who rushed at him madly.

For moments a struggle that was deadly held in that room. I had the right arm of my man clutched firmly, but such mortal strength I had never encountered. I slowly bore him down across my knee, though he fought and bit my hands and arms. In my mood I was his master, and though he felt it, he did not flinch. I tortured him until his spine was twisted to the cracking point. Then I struck him a blow that would have felled an ox. He dropped beside the secretary, and I stamped him in the face.

Across the room it was no man-to-man struggle. That knife flashed first at the throat, then at the heart of the Indian, driving him to desperation because he could not break through. His great blows smote thin air; his reaching paws grasped thin steel. He saw his mate go down, and with a howl of fury fairly spitted himself. The other man coolly wiped his knife while he struggled in death, looked up at me, and laughed.

That decided me on a sudden idea that had been born of the part I had to play. I had paid my debt of gratitude. In my heart I hated that man as much as those helpless things, whom we two strong men had crushed like flies. I had just sniffed battle. As he picked up the fallen packet on the floor, I spoke to him.

"We're square now, aren't we?"

"We are indeed," was the answer.

"What shall we do with them?" I asked, keeping cool under the strain.

"This one," he said, pointing at the secretary, "I shall take him back with me tonight. I am preparing now for a journey, my friend. He will go along as a very sick companion; and so he is, from the way that chair landed on his head. The others? They are helpless without him, and will soon be lost in the city. I shall take away their clubs, and it will appear that they fought and this one killed his companion."

His cunning brought from me admiration. He was taking back below the line this man whom I had knocked senseless, and there would finish him in leisurely fashion. The other two were done for. I stepped to the door and faced him.

"I am going to tell you a little story, my friend," I began, speaking softly, that Southern tongue stealing in and making the words hiss. "You did save me from death early tonight. I did know too much, and I was on my way to tell what I knew." He started for the first time when he heard that, but looked at me steadily. "I have a friend who is trying to do justice, and according to his law you and this man have both murdered. I have paid my debt to you. Now I say you will not take that man with you tonight; you will not go yourself, while I bar the way. This door leads outward. Are you coming?"

I looked deeply into his eyes, bloodthirst almost blinding me. There I saw a strange thing. A sadness spread over his face, that made him splendid as he stood there.

"I must go," he replied gravely, as if I were arguing the matter, instead of challenging a death struggle. "I like you, for you are a man. What would this friend do if he were here?"

"He would be bound to arrest you," I answered soberly. "I have betrayed him once today. I shall not do it again."

"Then I will bargain with you. If you conquer me, you will be free to do as you wish. If I conquer you and let you live, you must take this packet to the house we have just left. You must also see your friend, and tell him on oath what has happened. Tell him I swear on the Sacred Cross that this man killed—with the help of those brutes—the man whom no one knows. For that he shall have justice. Tell him that I killed the other; he was the murderer of my father! Will you promise?"

I felt a pity for him as he stood there, for his words were an appeal to Frank Madden's justice. He felt what he did was right; I myself did not pity the man in his power. I nodded and then beckoned him on.

He came, dropping his knife as he advanced. It was magnificent the careless way he did it, though he did not know but that I was stronger than he. And then——

What a fight it was! He was a panther, I the goring bull. He fought with grace and ferocity that was terrible, while I hammered him with brute force and sheer weight. Over that table, over fallen bodies, we squirmed and fought, always in silence. I often wondered what the peaceful policeman a block away was thinking of while this thing went on under his nose. Little time I had, though, to think. Once he got my throat in his two hands, and I was purple when they were pried loose. I smashed his side with a blow, and I heard him groan. Then he wrestled.

Hold after hold he found on me, only to have each broken. He could gain no advantage; neither could I. We rested for a moment, and I taunted him with a single word. "Woman-trader!" I called him. He came again, transformed.

What followed I can but dimly remember. I fell before his onslaught, and my head struck the broken table with sickening force. I could not fight back, but defended desperately. He was infuriated, and his strength grew with his madness. Those fingers clutched my throat again. I tore at them, but bands of iron could not have been harder. My sense grew dim. I struck a last mighty blow and then all was dark.

CHAPTER VIII.

IT WAS an awful thing to lift that terrible weight off my chest. It seemed as if I could never do it, yet something drove me on. I knew that I had to get up at once, and then I awoke. I was lying on the street side of the rooming-house, as unnoticeable as any ordinary drunk. The weight on my chest was the packet that I was to deliver. A distant tower clock sounded three.

Three o'clock! All that night ran before me like a bad dream, something that I had imagined. Only my bruised body and sore spirits told me they were true. I had been beaten in a fair fight. The bird Frank Madden wanted had flown. I had one duty left to perform, and then I would be through with the whole hateful business.

I looked at that packet for a long time. I had to go to her home with them and deliver them to her. I rose stiffly; I would face the music and be done with it.

I walked with great difficulty, and it seemed the way was over long. I halted often for breath, and under the glare of an arc light examined the package. It was loosely wrapped, and I peered inside. It was a sheaf of legal-looking papers. The wrapper was off in my hands; I saw a fortune in United States bonds, their numbers looking up at me like faces!

I hurried then. It looked as if the night was my hour of destiny. If I failed to deliver those things to her, I would have died of pure shame, yet everywhere around me were late hour stragglers who would have robbed me for one thousandth of the value of one. My feet flew over the walks.

I fairly ran up to the door, and it swung open in my very face and shut when I had stepped inside. The woman who served her knew me, but gave no sign save to beckon me to the rear of the hall, where I had been before. In a curtained alcove was a door, and she pointed to it, turning back to her post at the door. I turned the knob slowly, hesitantly, and then the door yielded inward. I heard voices distinctly. I listened.

It was the girl's voice speaking. "You are the Frank Madden, are you not?" came in her calm, cold voice.

I thrilled as with an electric shock. What was he doing there at an early morning hour? Then my heart turned to water. He had discovered them.

"I am," answered his voice, grave and courteous as ever.

"You know a Mr. John Vaile?" she asked.

"No one better. What of him?" came from Madden.

"I sent for you because he is in great trouble; I am responsible. I want you to aid me in helping him out. Will you?" There was a quiver in her voice that shook me like the ague.

Madden was all attention. I could fairly feel him snap himself erect and face her. "All that a mortal could do! Tell me all there is to know."

"There is much," she began simply. "It will clear away two things you want to know. The first is the death of the man who has no name as yet. I will give him one now. James Woolsey was the foreman of my father's ranch in the State of Cnihuahua, Mexico. Later he was companion of my brother in a fight for their rights."

She paused, and again I thrilled. Her brother?

"He was killed," her voice trembled just a little, "because he would not give up a packet containing great wealth. After he was dead they took it, anyway. Later another man gave his life because he had it, but would not give it up. You know who he is. Tonight my brother and John Vaile went to meet the servants of that man, to recover the packet. Mr. Vaile should have returned in two hours. It has been eight." Her voice was breaking. "For my brother I have no hope. He is dead, I know. The other one—I cannot but hope for his own sake that he is still alive. Would you try to find him if I would lead you myself?"

My heart almost stopped of sheer joy, and then it beat again high and strong with such hope as I had never known. She cared that much for me, and that man whom I had followed was her brother. I suddenly found out why I had hated him, for the simple reason that I no longer did, after she said that. Madden was speaking again.

"It seems strange to me that he should aid your brother," he said in a hard, cool voice that I did not like. "His first duty was to me, and your brother is against me. There is much I do not understand."

"Ah, I know you cannot!" she cried. "But we have no time, to waste if we save him."

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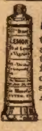

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MUTUAL SALES CO., Dept. X, 300 W. Madison St., Chicago, Ill.

"You do not understand," he answered. "You have just implicated yourself in two crimes in which men lost their lives. You tell me of a man, my friend, who has allied himself with you. I cannot believe it. I have but one alternative. I shall have to arrest you."

I heard a low cry of fear from her, as the point of view he took dawned upon her. I had not dreamed of it myself. I hesitated no longer, but stepped into the room, facing them both at once.

The air was charged with a feeling that I had never known before. Madden was looking at me as if I was some strange beast, while for the second time that night the girl was astounded completely. I was bloody from head to foot, and my face and neck were torn and bleeding. I spoke to her first, gently as ever I uttered a word in my life.

"Mary," I almost whispered.

Then I stretched out my hand. She came to me like a little child. Before I knew it she was in the hollow of my arm. We faced Madden together.

His face was a study. He sat quietly enough in his chair, but the whole gamut of human emotions chased over his face. I was trembling so at first that I could not speak, and scarcely knew where I was until I felt her steady me with a little hand. Madden was waiting for me to speak. I measured each word, knowing full well that fate was playing strongly in the game.

"Madden," I began quietly, "I have not played fairly with you; I want you to know it before I start to explain. I have known some things that I have not told you, for reasons that you will know soon. Will you, my friend, trust me now, knowing that I have deceived you, but will never do so again? Will you listen to what we both have to tell you, and then render justice here tonight?"

"If I do not?" he questioned shortly.

"Then I must fight again for her honor and mine," I answered him gravely.

We looked each other in the eyes. A clock was ticking away, and it sounded like dripping water in some damp tomb. Something terrible was boiling in Madden's brain, for his gray eyes were black as the sea at twilight. He started from his chair, and then something in the back of brain drew his eyes away. For a moment he heeded neither of us, and then when he turned and walked close up to both of us, I suddenly saw that he was old—old with the memory of some other scene of years gone.

"You two are a pair of children," he said, with a smile that was beautiful to see. "But you have a lot of explaining to do." And suddenly he gripped my hand with a fierce, hard grasp that made me know how much he loved me as a friend.

The tension was broken. A flood of words rushed from my lips, and I told him all that I knew, and why I had kept from him the first meeting with her, and of the rose I had found later. When I mentioned that she looked surprised, and then really troubled. "He was my brother; I had to go with him," she whispered. I told him how her brother had saved my life, and had asked me to repay him. I had done it, and getting from him a "receipt in full," I had fought my best to keep him from Madden's law. His eyes sparkled at that, as if he had seen the fight that took place, while she looked at me in wonder, as if she had never heard of a code of honor like that. I finished by handing her the package that had been sent, her eyes lighting up like an angel's when she unwrapped it. Madden's bulged, as well they might. Wealth of no uncertain nature was tied up there.

I finished. It had been a remarkable thing to stand up and tell one's best friend that you had betrayed him, and still ask for his friendship. Madden was looking at the girl. She nestled a little closer to me, and I held her protectingly.

"I don't know where to begin, senor," she said softly. "There is so much to tell. Yet I will try."

And she did. It had Madden and me both watching her with bated breath and eyes that followed every movement of her lips.

Her father had come to her native land a soldier of fortune, and won both the fortune and the hand of the daughter of the Governor of the State. He had countless acres of land, rich mines, high position. His home was happy, and two children were born. Then had come the storms.

A political uproar had brought another power to life within his province. Another white man had tasted of the spoils of battle, but did not know how to use them wisely. War had followed upon war; their followers had clashed over boundary lines; mining disputes had followed. Then came the revolution. The late comer's party had triumphed, and he had gained possession of the other's lands. Her father, shrewd beyond measure, had humbled himself before the new government, and claimed the right of original grantee. Money spent in the right place had achieved good results. The matter was taken to the courts, then to the seat of power itself. Her father had won, but had paid dearly for it. A midnight raid by guerrillas had almost destroyed his home and wrecked the health of his wife. His children were away at school; he did not send for them until too late. His wife died, and he sickened and drooped, as strong men will who will not live of their own choice. He followed soon after. The two, her brother and herself, had come to an empty place they had known as home. The boy swore vengeance, knowing that his father's enemy had led the raid.

What followed was an old story. They were driven out again, but with a fortune in the securities which she held in her hands. Her brother was officer in a rebel army at eighteen, and together they had come to this country to live until the time should come for him to strike. They had brought no one but their ranch foreman and her servant. Awaiting an opportunity to cash those bonds, each had taken turns in wearing them on his person. They felt that they might be pursued, and their fears were well grounded. Woolsey had been carrying them in his turn when Fate clutched and broke him.

Madden knew what followed that. He had entered there and striven hard to find his murderer. I had told him facts, but she had given him reasons. She had drawn pictures before our mind's eyes; men of experience, we knew what she said was true.

"I have no excuse to offer for what has been done, senor," she said. "The man who calmly and coolly tried to take my father's property, and who achieved his end, was found by you with a dagger in his heart. His blood washed out not half the stain. My brother is now on his way to the line with another wretch who aided the despoiler. He has sworn to take true vengeance; I am only surprised that it came so soon. We have conquered because we were in the right. In another month a new revolution will be on foot, and I will send the money from these," she held up the bonds, "to help bring 'real' peace and justice to my native land. It is the end of the story, senor. What have you to say?"

I knew already, but I let him think it out. The rapid course of two days had cheated his law, but he knew the right when he saw it, and went straight for it every time. When he spoke it was as coldly as if he was seated on the bench, dealing justice of the man-made kind.

"You played your own hand rather freely," he said. "Yet I cannot blame you. It is the end of the story, John. Shall we close the book?" He turned to go.

"Not quite, my boy," I checked him almost before he got under way for the door. "Will you have a carriage here tomorrow at eight o'clock? Also drop in on the way and see the good father at the Church of the Sacred Heart. He is a good friend of mine."

He looked at me blankly, as if the strain had driven me out of my mind.

"And I'll need you, too, old man," I said smilingly, as both he and the girl looked at me astonished. "I'll want you as a witness."

With a shout he sprang clear across the room and gripped me with both his hands, while the girl buried her crimson face on my shoulder. From right under my heart I heard a muffled "Oh, senor!"

* * * * *

"And to think, you did not even ask me first!" she said an hour later, after Madden had gone away chuckling over my good fortune. I stopped her reproachful smile in a most effective way.

"Well, I'll ask you now, senorita. Will you share my poor little fortunes, and journey through life with me, bearing a little of the burden at times, but knowing always that I love you——" I got no further. She pulled down my head and whispered a soft little Spanish phrase in my ear.

A glorious day was breaking over the city, gilding its tall buildings with calm glory. She led me to the window, and together we looked out over the city, neither speaking, for our hearts were full. It was I who broke the silence.

"I must go now, if only for a little while," I said to her. "But will you answer one question for me, dear. Suppose I had not returned tonight? What would you have done?"

She laughed in a way that was good to hear. "I was sure of you, Senor Jack," she cried gayly. "But——" She pouted her lips at me in a most adorable way. "If you had not come—but let me show you."

She took my hand and led me beyond the livingroom, into the holy of holies, my lady's boudoir. In the window, glowing with morning light, there was placed a marble box, and from the soft loam it held there grew a shrub. She drew me closer to it and pointed. In the center, raising its head to meet the life-giving sun, was a most wonderful red rose.

The End.

⁂

Getting Thin.

"Why all the joy noise?" asked Betters, as his wife came singing out of the diningroom.

"Good news," replied she, beaming.

"Do I come in on it?"

"Well, I met Mrs. Whatmore this morning. She tells me that I weigh at least fifteen pounds less than when she last saw me!"

"She doesn't care what she says, does she?"

"Don't you think I do?"

"Do you?"

"I know I do. I feel it in my bones!"

"But you ought to feel it in your corsets."

"Haven't you noticed it?"

"Well, speaking as the man who hooks you up the back——"

"Pshaw! That doesn't mean anything. Dresses are always tight."

"Then speaking with the voice of the man who occupies one side of a bed that is so heavily weighted on the other side that he has to hang on to keep from rolling down hill——"

"If you'd just pause to consider how long those springs have been in use, you'd realize that they are bound to be weakened."

"How about dinner?"

"Not until you admit that Ethel Whatmore told the truth."

"Far be it from me to doubt the word of a perfect lady, but, speaking as the man who has his arm around your waist, I must admit that you are still delightfully plump."

"I've lost fifteen pounds!"

"I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll eat dinner, then we'll go over to the drug store for a glass of soda, and we'll put you on the scales. The druggist has put in a highly nickeled set of scales just to lure banting ladies into his parlor."

Later that evening Mrs. Betters stepped on the scales. Betters adjusted the indicator at fifteen pounds less than Mrs. Betters had last weighed and let go; the arm went up with a bang! By degrees he added twenty-seven pounds and got a balance.

"Didn't I tell you!" chortled Mrs. Betters.

"I haven't told you yet," replied Betters, with a grin. "You have gained twelve pounds."

"I have done nothing of the kind!"

"The scales say so."

"I don't care! Ethel says I am fifteen pounds lighter!"

"You surely do not take her word against the word of these nice new scales?"

"I certainly do! I have known Ethel for twenty years, and I never saw these scales until ten minutes ago!"

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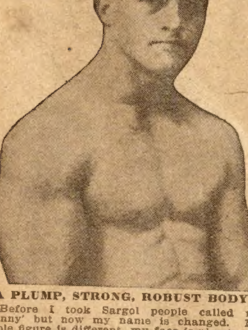

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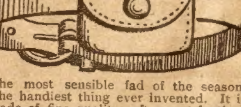

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The Hennery-Flyery

By T. C. McConnell

"I TAKE it you are a reporter," said the shrewd-looking, businesslike man who happened to be my seatmate in the Pullman coach.

"Yes," I replied.

"Well, I now have something ready for publication which I have for years kept a secret. It is a scheme that has made me rich, so I have no further motive for secrecy. When generally known it will revolutionize the world, because it is bound to bring down the cost of living at least half."

With pencil and pad in hand I bade him proceed.

"You may say my name is John Bates," he continued, "postoffice address Chicago, rural route number three, and that I shall take pleasure in replying either orally or by mail to any inquiries that may be made regarding my business.

"I have made a fortune, sir, out of my hennery-flyery, a very simple and inexpensive combination.

"I own a small farm near Chicago. Fifteen years ago I inclosed four acres of land on which was a solid sod of the best chicken grass. I used fly-proof screening for the fence, covering the inclosure with the same material. In one corner I have my hennery proper, with a tin roof the ordinary height from the floor. The roof of the rest of the inclosure is only eighteen inches from the ground, a height to which a chicken can easily reach. Occasionally, of course, a young and inexperienced rooster bumps his head against the roof when attempting to crow, but from one or two lessons he usually learns discretion.

"In the opposite corner of the field I have my fly hatchery, also covered by a tin roof. The partition between it and the main grounds is made from regular chicken-fencing wire, through which flies can go, but chickens can not.

"You see I had read of how one fly may within an incredibly short time become the maternal ancestor of billions—enough, in themselves, to furnish sustenance for many, many chickens. So I started my flyery department first. I placed in the hatchery some material best adapted to breeding purposes, then turned in a few flies. No fly could escape, so of course in a short time my four acres contained decillions upon decillions of flies—in short the inclosure was practically full of the insects.

"I then stocked up my hennery. The main grounds are used by chickens and flies in common. The fowls thrive and wax fat on the flies—solid fat, sir, solid as if they had been grain-fed. Their digestive organs are aided by the grass, to which they have constant access. Thus there is absolutely no expense for chicken feed."

"But what do the flies live on?" I inquired.

"Oh, yes, I am coming to that. You see, we—my assistants and I—kill and clean anywhere from one dozen to a dozen dozen chickens every night, so as to have them ready for the early morning city market. We save every ounce of blood, which, with the offal, feathers and all, we deposit in the fly hatchery, and the flies live well thereon. Thus the chickens live off the flies, the flies live off the chickens, and incidentally many fastidious epicures subsist from both. We carry the manure from the hennery proper to the hatchery. This mixed with the feathers make an ideal fly broodery. Hence the whole thing is self-sustaining."

"But," I asked, "if your plan becomes universal, will not the business be a failure because of a general public feeling of revulsion at the tactics used?"

"By no means. Everybody knows chickens eat all the flies and bugs they can catch, anyhow. Besides, when at large, chickens eat filth which is far more revolting to the refined taste than flies. Why, my product has the finest flavor imaginable. I cater to none but the high-class trade—in fact I supply the fly cafes of the city. Ha, ha! Catch the pun?

"It's a great scheme, sir. I have cleared ten thousand dollars a year for fifteen years from it; have invested my money in Chicago real estate, and am now a rich man.

"I realize that by giving this away I will reduce my annual income more than one half, but I am glad to make the sacrifice for the good of humanity. Think what it means! The plan will work just the same with turkeys and all other fowls. Within a year or two after you have made this public, meat and eggs will sell for less than one third of the present cost. Producer and consumer will be alike happy and will arise and call me blessed—the greatest public benefactor of the age."

He went on and explained how he had succeeded in keeping his secret from his neighbors, and gave me many more details, [illegible] answering all my inquiries. The scheme seemed plausible and I could scarcely repress my enthusiasm as I mapped out in my mind the colossal story I should unload next day on the Chicago Leaderbeater-Paindealer. Even though the plan should prove impracticable—all right, the story would create a sensation anyway.

I hurriedly began preparing my manuscript. After working a few moments I suddenly thought of another query.

"Why, say, Mr. Bates, you know when winter comes on, the flies and grass——" but here I was interrupted by a nudge from a gentleman who sat on the seat behind me. He whispered in my ear:

"Don't ask him that question, please. He has a process of explaining the problem, but it is complicated, and right there is where he always gets rattled—goes to pieces in fact; and I don't want a scene here. I am taking him to the asylum, you know."

* * *

His "Brother."

It is a serious offense for a German soldier to appear in public except in uniform. Even when he is on furlough he must always wear it.

A certain Lieutenant Schmidt, who was engaged in some adventure or other dressed up as a civilian, was having a fine time of it when, on turning a corner, he unexpectedly met his colonel.

Lieutenant Schmidt, however, did not lose his presence of mind, but, in a changed voice, asked:

"Can you tell me, sir, where Lieutenant Schmidt lives? I am his brother from the country, and am paying him a visit."

The colonel gave the desired information and Lieutenant Schmidt hurried home and got into uniform as soon as possible. He thought he had deceived his superior officer, but next day when he met his colonel, the latter said

"Lieutenant Schmidt,—if your brother from the country pays you another visit, I'll have him placed in close confinement for thirty days."

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A Much Married Actress.

Clergyman—"I have a hazy recollection of marrying you before."

Actress—"You did, but not to this gentleman."—Life.

Sure.

"They say riding in automobiles enlarges the heart," said the boob.

"I know it enlarges the head," commented the wise guy.

EVERYTHING GOING UP

In a Way.

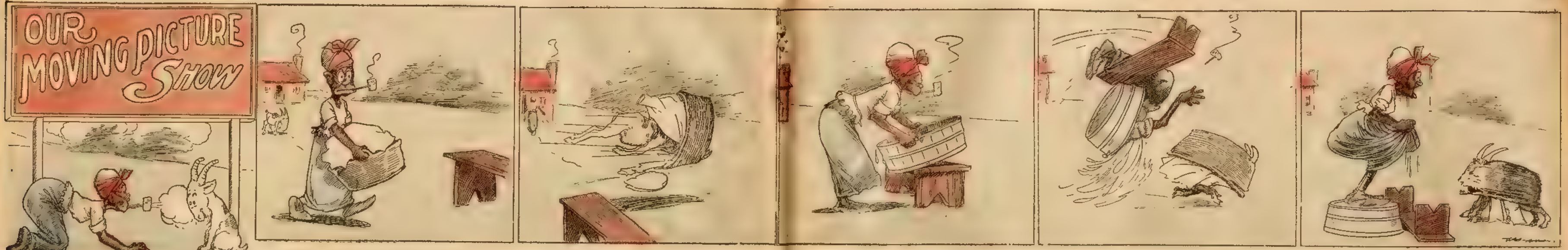
"Are you acquainted with Mrs. Hifly, your fashionable neighbor?"

"Only in a roundabout way. Her cat boards at my house."

The Rivals.

Mr Richfelo "Miss Beautie's shoelace came unfastened, and she let me tie it"

Miss Prettie—Yes, she wears such tight corsets she can't stoop."



"It am powerful hard fo' mammy with—

'Everything goin' up, an' -

'T[illegible] atiz catchin' me, an -

"Glory-y! Angel Gab-re-l'

It am d[illegible] Help' I'm a goner'

Traveled Incog.

First American—"Have a good time abroad?"

Second American—"Fine I traveled incog. Went where I pleased, and escaped the vulgar curiosity of the gaping crowd"

"Eh? How did you travel?"

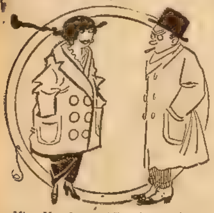
"Incognito, I said. I didn't let 'em know I was a rich American Just pretended I wasn't anybody but an ordinary English lord."

Room at the Top.

Jinks—"There's always room at the top."

Winks—"What have you struck now?"

Jinks—"Here's an account of a man who began as a newspaper reporter at fifteen dollars a week, and now he makes one hundred dollars a day, as a racehorse starter."



Miss Manchaser—"You know the old adage, 'Love laughs at locksmiths'?"

Mr. Grouchmore—"Yep. Getting in is easy enough, but getting out is no joke"

Choosing a Career.

"Well, Tommy, what do you want to be when you grow up? A lawyer?"

"Naw."

"Oh, I know. You want to be a policeman or an engineer."

"Naw, I don't. I wanta be a bricklayer"

"A bricklayer? Why, that's hard work"

"So's everything. But there's so many days a bricklayer don't hafter work on account o' the weather—an' there's so much rotten weather"

An Offended Artist.

The artist's woman friend was being shown around the studio

"Oh, perfect!" she exclaimed, looking at a picture; "those ostriches are simply superb You should never paint anything but birds"

The artist winced under the blow

"These are not ostriches," he said, "they are angels."

Endless Trouble.

A young man in Atchison, Kan., gave a young woman a costly ring, paying for it in installments. The girl jilted him and kept the ring. He will be eighteen months finishing the payments. It's the little problems of this sort that save Atchison from absolute dullness.

Nature's Wise Provisions.

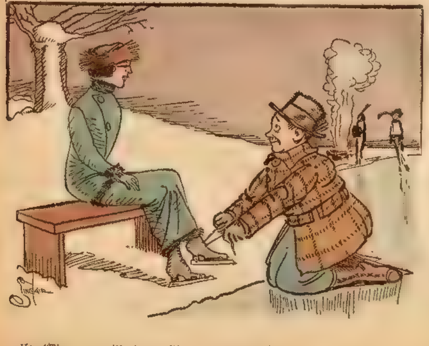
Professor de Science—"At the North Pole there is no north, no east, no west Every direction you turn is south

Old Lady—"Well, goodness me! If it's as cold there as people say, that's the only direction in which any one would want to turn."

The American Way.

"Who presents people at court, pop?"

"In this country, my son, it is generally done by the grand jury."



He—"Then you will elope with me tomorrow night?"

She—"Yes I'll leave the house at 10 o'clock."

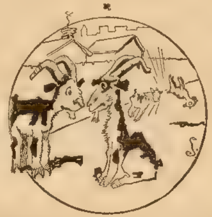
He—"But will your parents be abed by then?"

She—"Oh, yes—if I tell them about it!"

Baby Slow to Learn.

Young Mother (to herself)—"I don't see why it is that baby doesn't talk better. He's very backward"

Same Mother (five minutes afterward)—"Diddee ittee tootsie wootsie waken up, zee tunnin' ittie pettie, so he was"



Madam Capers the Goat—"You'll have to make Billie behave. He's been butting my little Nannie all up and down the alley."

Billie's Mother—"I do my best with him, but he's so headstrong."

Luxuries Must Be Paid For.

European Innkeeper—"How do you like your room?"

American Tourist (jokingly)—"Seems just like home. Makes me feel as if I was back in New York. The room smells of sewer gas"

Innkeeper (to clerk)—"Add five shillings for sewer gas."

Not Mr. Blinkers.

Domestic (trembling)—"Oh, please, I hears burglars in the house."

Mrs. Blinkers (reassuringly)—"Most likely it's Mr. Blinkers just in from the club.

Domestic (positively)—"No, mum, it's burglars. They haven't stumbled against anything at all."

What She'd Wear.

Mr Gumpps—If I should die, I don't believe you'd even wear mourning for me."

Mrs. Gumpps—"Well, I might wear half-mourning just to let folks know you weren't more'n half a husband"

No Amateurs.

Hotel Doctor—"I hope there will be no mistakes in administering these medicines"

Servant—"Have no fear, doctor, I am a professional nurse, and madame is a professional invalid."

Another View.

"I see that the bachelor tax bill has been thrown out."

"And very properly. Instead of taxing bachelors the women should pay them bounties for not making homes unhappy."

Making Hay, etc.

Author—"I wish I had time enough to write a good book."

Friend—"Why not take time?"

Author—"Can't afford to; I'm too busy writing best sellers."

Sillicus—"What do you consider the first requisite of a good husband?"

Cynicus—"A good wife."

The Jury's Sympathies.

Stranger—"You still have lynchings here, do you?"

Westerner—"Only in the case of bad characters. When a fairly good citizen gets arrested for anything we always let the law take its course"

"That's encouraging."

"Yes, you see an average jury can always be depended upon to hang a good citizen if it gets a chance."

The Millennium Coming.

Winks—"In every generation the age for marriage gets later. Our grandmothers married at sixteen, but our daughters do not marry until twenty-five or thirty"

Jinks—"Well, that's all right. In the course of time people will put off marriage until too old to marry at all, and then the millennium will begin."

Yes, Cordelia, a lawn dress is appropriate for a grass widow.

Changed.

"P·ck isn't happy His wife is continually saying sharp and snappy things to him."

"W[illegible] told me before he married her that was what he admired most about her"

"Yes, but he considered it wit then."

Missing.

'C[illegible] himself an old sea dog, eh?"

"Yes, but nobody has ever been able to locate his bark

Not a Swindler.

Daughter—"That man who advertised all the latest popular songs for one dollar is a swindler."

Old Man—"Eh? Didn't he send anything for your money? I'll report him to the authorities at once"

"Yes, he sent the latest popular songs, just as advertised, but they were only the words. No music at all. I can read them of course, but I can't sing them"

'My dear, that man is not a swindler He is a philanthropist"

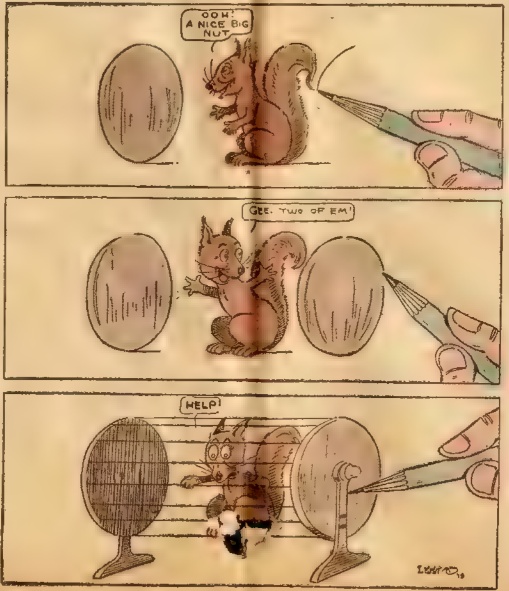
A Beggarly Outlook.

Young Lawyer (having passed his exams)—"Well, I'm glad it's over. I've [illegible] to death the last few years [illegible] legal education."

Old Lawyer—'Well, cheer up, my boy; it'll be a long time before you have any more work to do'

Scarcity of "rocks" causes most of the shipwrecks on the sea of matrimony.

ARTIST FOOLINGS

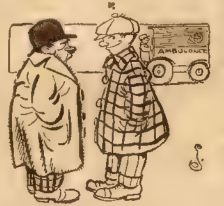


For Women and Fools.

Wife—"Henry, you need a rest Let us go to Bongtong Springs."

Hub—"That place! Why, it's only fit for women and fools."

Wife—"I know it Let's go there together."



Hank—"And where did the auto hit Bill?"

Pete—"Right in front of the Masonic Temple, and behind the ear!'

A Pleasing Theory.

Anxious Mother—"There's a look about that young man's eyes that I don't like He looks at me out of their corners, as if trying to conceal something."

Daughter—"Perhaps he is trying to conceal his admiration for you, ma."

Mother (much relieved)—"Oh! I didn't think of that."

A Mean Rival.

Miss Esthete—"Oh, I just adore poets. What a sad, soulful expression Mr. Longhair has

Mr. Smartchap—"You would have a sad, soulful expression, too, if you were as far behind in your board bill as he is"

Second Thoughts Best.

Deacon Lowlands—"Talk about hailstorms I've seen hailstones come down as big as apples'

Listener—"What sort of apples?"

Deacon Lowlands—"Well—er—crab apples."

Penalty of Greatness.

First Guest—"Who is that distinguished-looking man who has been sitting alone all the evening"

Second Guest—"He is the author of a dozen noted books which no one here has read."

Air Enough.

Housekeeper—"Why have you moved your bakery so far uptown?"

Baker—"Too crowded in dot old puilding. I could nod get enough air'

Housekeeper—"Land sakes! there was too much air in your bread as it was."

Fixing a Date.

Winkers—"When did this fashion of puffing out women's shoulders, so as to make them look athletic, start up?"

Binkers—"About the time of the Jeffries-Johnson fight, I believe."

A Blunt Suitor.

Her Father (sternly)—"Young man, can you support my daughter in the style she's been accustomed to?"

Lover (briskly)—"I can, but I'd be ashamed to"—Life

A Modern Financier.

Business Man—"See here, sir! You gave me a check on the Highfly Bank and I find that there is no such institution."

Financier (who has been playing in hard luck)—"Hold on to the check, my dear sir. It will be all right. The bank isn't in operation yet'

"Sir!"

"Oh, it's all right After I get a few thousand of those checks out, the holders will find it to their interest to club together and help me start the bank."

Cure For Overwork.

Physician—"Overwork is the cause of your trouble, sir."

Patient—"But I can't stop these times. Our business requires constant attention, and I must have an income, you know.'

Physician—"True. Make over your interest in the firm to a stouter man, and then get a job on a salary'

He's All Right.

First Congressman—"You have voted against every measure that was for the best interests of the nation. What will you say to your constituents when you get home?"

Second Congressman—"Say? I'll tell 'em I've got an appropriation for Mud Creek Whoop!"

Plenty of Credit.

Old Gentleman—"I find, sir, that you have no financial standing, no credit anywhere."

Young Getthere—"You do me injustice sir I have easily borrowed several hundred dollars since it became known I was engaged to your daughter

Found at Last.

Employment Agent—"How does your wife like that girl I sent her?"

Mr. Upton—"That girl must be an angel straight from heaven. She's been with us a week, and my wife hasn't made a complaint."

Too Big a Hurry.

"Drive like the dickens;" shouted Smith, springing into a taxi.

With a lurch the car went forward and away they went like lightning through the gathering fog

At last, after an hour's furious racing they slowed up and Smith poked his head out of the car

"Are we nearly there?" he asked breathlessly

The chauffeur turned in his seat and shouted:

"Where do you want to go, sir? You have not told me yet."

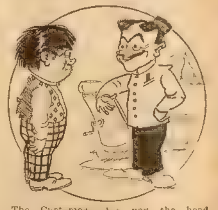
Unused to It.

"You handle large sums of money in this play—a million or more in every act."

"I see" said Yorick Hamm

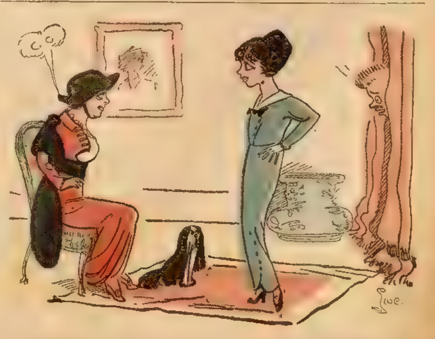
"And you must handle it as if you were used to it."

"I see. Could you let me have a two-dollar bill to rehearse with?"



The Customer—Are you the head barber?

The Tonsorial Artist—"Yes, sir. I operate on the head exclusively."



Mrs Newlywed—"Why, yes, I'll take care of your dog while you are away!"

Mrs Jones—"Thank you so much—and be careful of him, won't you—never give him any of your cooking without first trying it on your husband'

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The Cabalistic Hand

Or, TELLTALE FINGERPRINTS

By George Ethelbert Walsh

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CHAPTER XII.

MAXINE grew more thoughtful and even morose, after the events of that night of strange adventures. He would sit in his chair or recline on his couch lost in deep thought. Clearly the case was giving him no end of trouble and worry. He had been baffled in the past in following clews of crime, but they had always been of a nature to cause only momentary worry; he had invariably picked up new clews and followed them to a solution.

But here was a case that was unlike anything he had ever handled. The police were still stumbling along stupidly in the solution of the trunk mystery, arresting and suspecting people right and left, but only to change their opinion a few days later. Maxine sent word to Inspector McGonigle that Parks was not the guilty one, and that to hold him longer as a suspect would be cruel and unjust. The Inspector had demanded further evidence, but Maxine refused it.

'Intuition, Inspector, call it intuition," he had replied blandly. "I can't put it stronger."

Parks was released, and he returned to the Seldon home, where he resumed his duties as before. If he realized that he was still suspected and held under surveillance, he was shrewd enough not to show it. He was still the same quiet, unobtrusive, capable servant, whose calm gray eyes and immobile face betrayed nothing of his inner thoughts

I waited with dread the almost certain appearance of the mysterious stranger's last fingerprint. By a series of events that had led us to believe that he would present us with his full signature. First, there had come the forefinger on the bloody rag; then the thumb on the dirty piece of paper left in the office one night, followed by that of the middle finger with the other two on the wax seals of the bomb, and finally the fourth fingerprint on the flour-covered floor of the cellar. Each one of these occasions had been marked by exciting, if not actually dangerous, circumstances

What would happpen when the print of the last finger was revealed to us? Would the invisible foe, having delivered his uncanny warning in a series of fingerprints, attempt to crush us then by some unexpected blow? Were these messages all the part of a scheme whose climax we could not foretell or even imagine?

Such thoughts and speculations ran riot in my mind, causing me no little uneasiness. Undoubtedly the master criminal was doing it all for a purpose. My theory was that he wished to warn us off his trail; threatening us with some terrible vengeance if we persisted in following up any clew to the trunk murder.

Maxine entertained his old belief that it was all a direct challenge to his skill, to humble and humiliate him; it was a supreme battle of wits, and the murderer was so confident of defeating the master detective of the world that he used strange and unusual methods to tease and tantalize him. At first it amused Maxine; then it irritated and angered him; but now it was acting as a powerful tonic on his nerves, and he entered into the game prepared for the supreme battle of his life. He was as eager for the next move of the enemy as a child might be for a new toy

"Montague," he remarked, "I'll admit that I was all wrong in my conclusions. At least there is one masterful criminal left in the profession. He knows how to cover his trail, and how to throw us off the scent by methods that are new; he actually flouts his crime in our face."

The precaution Maxine took to prevent another surprise was not entirely unknown to me; but that he had literally surrounded himself with an invisible network of devices that were almost sure to betray an intruder, I did not understand. He repeated his visits to the coal cellar of the Seldon house, and made various discoveries there. For instance, the coal pile had been moved recently in one corner of the room, and the marks of footprints other than our own were visible. The trapdoor leading to the basement above was next padlocked and sealed; but despite this precaution there were fresh marks found on the cellar floor

Some one entered the cellar without passing through the trapdoor. This was further evidenced by the thin layer of flour scattered on the rungs of the ladder and across the floor.

"Our enemy is hiding somewhere in that cellar," Maxine said thoughtfully, "or he has some secret passage to it that we know nothing about. I wonder if we haven't trapped him down there."

This theory seemed reasonable, but how he could find a hiding-place in the cellar that we could not discover was a mystery not easy to explain. Inspector McGonigle had, after the first thorough inspection of the place, abandoned all hope of finding any further clew to the crime in that part of the house, and Maxine had no difficulty in sealing up the coal cellar without attracting the attention of the police. It is true they watched our coming and going with interest, but I usually entertained them while Maxine was below making investigations. As our visits were made under the cover of darkness, we had no great trouble in eluding their vigilance. The servants were given strict orders not to interfere with the trapdoor or to let any one else down there. Maxine enforced this order by stretching an iron bar across the door and padlocking it to staples driven in the beams.

"If he's down there, Montague," he said with a smile, "we'll keep him there until he's starved out."

But our nightly investigations in the cellar revealed nothing more definite. It was almost a square room, with walls of stone which formed the foundation of the house. The only entrance to it was through the door in the ceiling or through a coal chute from the pavement outside. No one could possibly crawl through the latter. Maxine had tested it repeatedly, even to the extent of hiring a small boy to wriggle through the opening, but the youngster got caught halfway and had to be pulled back. It was clearly impossible for any man to enter the place through the coal chute.

This left us the only other conclusion The man was imprisoned there, or had some secret entrance that was not known to the owner of the house.

That would clearly explain the mystery of the trunk murder," Maxine said. 'The body could have been brought in through this secret entrance and deposited in one of the empty trunks. Then the murderer could escape through the same secret passage"

"You believe there is a secret passage that we're unable to discover?" I asked.

"It seems incredible, Montague, but I can prove it in a few days."

"You have a clew?'

"If there's no secret passage to the cellar, we have him imprisoned, Montague, and he can't get out except through the trapdoor, and that he couldn't break down without disturbing the household"

"Then you intend to starve him out?'

"A man will fight before he will starve, won't he, Montague?"

I admitted that most men with red blood in their veins would choose that course

"Well, I give him every opportunity to make a break for liberty, don't I?"

I understood in a flash the meaning, then, of Maxine's nightly visits to the cellar. At such times the door was left open, and any one imprisoned in the cellar would be tempted to make a break for liberty. Maxine had been patiently watching for this very overt act on the part of the man. Night after night he had prowled around in the dark cellar ostensibly looking for clews, but really giving the murderer a chance to show himself in a desperate effort to escape.

"Perhaps he has stored food and water somewhere in the cellar for a prolonged siege," I suggested.

"I've made allowances for that, but he must soon come forth to replenish his supplies. I give him a week to grow desperate."

"But how could he hide so successfully?" I asked, frowning as I thought of the many times we had studied every square inch of the wall surface.

Maxine looked perplexed. For a few moments he made no reply, and continued to stare at the ceiling.

"I confess I'm at a loss to explain that, Montague. He has baffled me in this as in other matters. But he's in the cellar, or has a secret entrance to it, for I find fresh evidence of it nearly every night. He does not go through the coal chute or the door overhead. Therefore, he must be a prisoner, or in the possession of knowledge about a secret entrance that enables him to go or come as he pleases."

"And you expect to find out in a few days whether or not there is such a passage?"

'Every criminal leaves some clew behind him," was the enigmatic answer, "and this one is very prolific in distributing his marks around. Yes, Montague, I think I shall be able to eliminate one of the two theories from the case in a few days."

And this is how it happened! After returning home late at night, Maxine and I talked a few minutes in his study, and then retired at about the same time. I had a restless night, and once I sat

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up in bed, awakened by a dream or a noise that had startled me. I was cold and shivering, and it seemed as if I had been visited by some one who crept into my room and then vanished in thin air as I opened my eyes. I was conscious of a curious sensation as if some voice had called to me from my dreams. It was a voice that held an echo of some past memory, and for a moment I sat there in bed so confused that I was unable to think straight.

Whether it was a dream or a real voice I could not decide, but remembering my past nervousness and hallucinations caused by the dread of another visit from our unknown enemy, I concluded that I had simply had a bad nightmare, and turned over and went to sleep again. All was quiet about the house, and nothing further disturbed my slumber.

Maxine looked pale and haggard when I met him in the morning; he had apparently spent a restless night, too. I spoke to him about the noise that had awakened me in the middle of the night; he had heard nothing, but he was instantly awake and alert.

"That's what I've been waiting for, Montague!" he exclaimed hastily, jumping from his chair

With only a dressing gown flung over his shoulders, he started downstairs to the office. I followed more leisurely, wondering what he expected to find. He was smiling rather grimly when I met him.

"That eliminates one of our theories, Montague," he greeted cordially.

"What does, Maxine?" I asked in surprise

"Our visitor was here again last night. He's no longer a prisoner in the cellar. If he didn't come out through the trapdoor, he has some secret entrance to the place. Hurry up, Montague, and we will find out."

"But how do you know any one was here last night? I may have had a bad dream, and the noise was a part of it."

"No, Montague, it was not a dream. Some one was in this office last night, and entered in the usual way—through that door."

"You had it locked?"

"Yes, and a cobweb fastened to the key, so no one could turn it without breaking the tiny thread. See the evidence."

He held up a filmy piece of silken cobweb as he spoke.

"But one of the servants might have turned it," I said doubtfully

"That might be true, but not likely, for you know how strict my orders are about any one going into my office when I've retired for the night. But assuming that it was an accident, how do you explain this?"

He next held up a broken strand of silk, which I looked at without comprehending.

"That was stretched across the doorway on the inside," Maxine continued, "and it was broken when I entered just now."

I nodded, but added again: "One of the servants might have entered, and——"

"And helped themselves to my stamps," Maxine interrupted "This little stamp box was closed and sealed down by a tiny strip of paper. Somebody opened it in the night."

Knowing the strict order and discipline Maxine maintained in his household, this third evidence convinced me that there had been an outside intruder who had entered the office. It was inconceivable that one of the servants would have the courage to unlock his office door to enter and tamper with anything on Maxine's desk.

"I see your last doubt has vanished, Montague. Well, then, suppose we look around for further evidence. If he visited us last night, it must have been for a purpose."

"Perhaps it was to show you that he could not be held a prisoner," I replied, with a smile.

"Possibly, but I think he had something more than that in mind."

If we expected to pick up any article that would give us a clew, we seemed doomed to disappointment. We looked in every part of the room for new evidence, but finally came back to the desk unenlightened. Maxine seated himself before it and pondered thoughtfully.

"It looks as though you were right, Montague," he said finally. "He had no other object apparently than to let us know that he could break away from his prison when he chose. But the interesting point is, how did he get out? If the locks and seals of the trapdoor are intact, I think we can accept as a certainty that there is a secret entrance to Mr. Seldon's coal cellar. Come, Montague, dress, and we will pay a visit to the cellar."

I rose slowly from my seat and started for the door, puzzled and anxious, but very curious to know whether the man had escaped from the cellar in the usual way. Suddenly Maxine called after me.

"Montague," he said rather sharply, "how many times have I asked you not to leave your pencils on my desk? I never use but one kind of lead. Here, take it away!"

He stood before the desk, extending a blue lead pencil in one hand. I stopped and fumbled in my pocket, and then replied:

"Why, sir, that isn't my pencil. Mine is here. Besides, I never use that kind"

I took the pencil and examined it closely, shaking my head slowly

"I never saw it before," I added

"Never saw it before? It's not yours?"

Maxine snapped it away from me and glanced sharply at the pencil. Slowly a smile dawned on his countenance

"Ah!" he breathed slowly. "That's another little souvenir of our friend. I thought he would leave something here to puzzle us. Now, Montague, what do you suppose he did that for?"

"Dropped it by accident, I suppose."

"An intentional accident, Montague, I believe. If he blundered like that I'd have little respect for him. No, Montague, he left it for a purpose"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE pencil was an ordinary blue-coated affair, with blue crayon for lead, and made of paper wound around in a spiral instead of two halves of cedar glued together. The point was freshly sharpened, inviting one to use it, and the other end showed the marks of wear as if the owner was addicted to the habit of chewing his pencil in moments of abstraction. The letters stamped on the side showed the grade of the lead and the prominent manufacturer's name

Maxine studied it carefully and thoughtfully, turning it over and over in his mind, smelling of it, and even testing it with his teeth and tongue. Then he began making microscopic examination of the indentations on the blunt end.

"They're marks made by teeth, Montague," he said, laying down his glass, "but I'm afraid they will furnish very little clew. There is as great a variety among teeth as among fingerprints, but I don't happen to be as familiar with them. Perhaps some day we may understand the science of identification by teeth, but for the present I'm afraid the art is not sufficiently developed to serve any purpose."

Maxine smiled good-humoredly at his little witticism and laid the pencil down on his desk.

"I can't bother with it now," he added. "We must go to Mr. Seldon's and see how the trapdoor is. Perhaps we'll find a better clew there."

"You think this pencil will furnish a clew?" I asked skeptically.

"Why not, Montague? Everything is a clew to somebody if we can read it right. A pin dropped by a woman has convicted her of crime, and a hairpin sent one woman burglar up for ten years. A lead pencil! Why, it may prove to convict a man of a dozen murders"

"How, sir? I can't see anything unusual about this pencil."

"Perhaps not, Montague. There was nothing unusual about the hairpin except that it was bent, and the way it was bent showed that the person owning it had fitted it in a lock that betrayed her. Montague, the simplest things are often the most damning. A burglar or murderer will see that all big things that may serve as clews are removed, but he forgets the lock of hair, the tiny piece of thread unraveled from a frayed coat-sleeve, or the pin dropped from his coat collar. It is such small things that betray the criminal."

"But this pencil is not such a tiny article as a pin or wisp of hair.

"Exactly, and that's why I think it was left here for a distinct purpose. If out enemy was a clumsy bungler, I should say perhaps he had inadvertently dropped it from his vest pocket as he leaned over the desk; but he's too careful and shrewd for that. I begin to understand his methods. If I were you, Montague, I'd be careful in handling it."

"Why, sir, can there be any danger?" I exclaimed in surprise, dropping the pencil.

"You may remember that every message he sent us contained a warning, a deadly hint that we might expect disaster if we were not careful. It was a test of our skill to unravel the mystery without being injured. I do not pretend to know the mystery of the lead pencil, but I think we'll discover it in time."

I moved cautiously away from the innocent little article and surveyed it with wondering eyes. Maxine laughed at my sudden suspicions.

"No, I don't think it will harm you, Montague, if you leave it alone," he said jokingly.

"How could it harm us?" I stammered.

"Why, that point is almost too tempting, Montague. Any one would be tempted to scribble aimlessly on paper with it, and if the lead didn't write well, force of habit might carry it to the tip of the tongue. Do you ever moisten a refractory pencil with the tongue to make it write better?"

"Yes," I acknowledged. "But what of that?"

"Nothing, Montague, except that it is a dirty habit, and, besides somewhat dangerous if you use pencils promiscuously. Suppose, for instance, there was a drop of some virulent poison on the end of that innocent little pencil? What then, Montague?"

I must have looked startled, for Maxine once more laughed softly.

"You think it's poisoned?" I stammered.

"You might try it, Montague."

"I'll throw it into the furnace" I said sharply, but Maxine quickly interfered.

"No, my dear Montague, you should never destroy a clew. That pencil may yet serve a distinct purpose in unraveling our knotty problem."

"If it's poisoned I don't like to see it lying around. I might forget myself and use it, and——"

"Break yourself of the habit of putting your pencil in your mouth, Montague, and there will be no danger"

I picked up the pencil, and added:

"Shall I file it away in the cabinet?"

"Not until we return from Mr. Sheldon's. I want to examine it again more carefully. But—ah, Montague! I have it! I see the point! Hand it to me!"

Seizing the pencil from my hands he held it up to the light, and then opening his penknife he began cutting at the blunt end of it

"It's another fingerprint sent to us, Montague," he said, as he slowly cut at the end. "Another clever little message. It will complete the set of fingerprints of the right hand. Now we have the set of five. Our enemy has been more than generous; and he defies us yet."

"I don't see any fingerprint," I said, watching him cut away with the blade of the penknife.

"No, neither do I, Montague—not yet," he replied slowly. "But it's here. It's an unusually clever scheme. This pencil, as you know is made of paper, wound around and around to form a holder for the lead. Now if we unwind it we may perhaps find our message on the inside of the paper. Anything clearer, Montague? Of course, no one but a genius would think of hiding it there, but our murderer is a master schemer, and he's trying us out most skillfully. Ah, I've started the paper."

The point of the knife blade had pricked up the end of the paper, but the thick enamel held it firmly in position. After a few more trials he stopped and reflected.

"No, I believe we will have to begin at the sharp end," he said. "It doesn't unwind well from this end."

"But if the lead is poisoned?" I warned.

"Quite right, Montague, and if I had a cut on my hands I might inoculate myself with a deadly poison. I think I'll be on the safe side and use gloves."

Maxine was capable of endowing the most innocent thing with such potential possibilities for evil that I found myself regarding the pencil much as I would a deadly weapon. Indeed, I mopped my forehead once or twice and was surprised to find I was perspiring freely, although it was not a warm day

"Now we will be safe from contact with any poison," he said, after adjusting his gloves to his hands.

"But there may be some way of injecting the poison toward you when you cut into it," I suggested.

"I was thinking of that very thing, Montague. From our past experiences with this fiend nothing is too subtle for him, and we must be on our guard every minute. I will take the added precaution of putting on a mask."

With a mask over his face, and gloves drawn over both hands, Maxine seemed guarded against ever possible danger, and while he began unwinding the paper pencil I withdrew to a respectful distance. The messenger of death intended for him might reach me, and I was in no mood to invite a risk of this nature. Slowly and cautiously he unwound the heavy paper after the end was started. It was the natural way of sharpening this kind of pencil; it was an operation performed by thousands of people every day; but to us it was something that caused both to hold our breath.

But nothing happened, and after an inch of the paper was removed Maxine paused and bent it back. Suddenly a smile of joy spread over his face, but I refrained from letting my curiosity get the better of me, and remained silent and expectant.

"Here's our message, Montague," he said exultantly. "Here's the last fingerprint of our enemy. There's no doubt about it. Now bring out the others, and we will reconstruct the whole hand. We have the thumb and four fingers for study."

I forgot my fear and drew eagerly toward him. There, clearly outlined on the back of the curling strip of paper,

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was a fingerprint. It looked as if somebody had deliberately stuck a finger in ink and after wiping off the surplus stamped it carefully on the paper. All the little curves, islands, and whorls were plainly imprinted there for our satisfaction.

"What a genius!" Maxine declared in admiration. "He must have removed the paper first and stamped the print on the inside and then carefully put it together again and dipped it in enamel. A mighty delicate piece of work. Apparently nothing is too difficult or elaborate for him. It's a compliment to us, Montague. Imagine Inspector McGonigle looking underneath the paper for a sign!"

"Then there's no danger attached to this message," I said. "It isn't like the other——"

"The point may be poisoned, Montague. Perhaps that was the sting to the little missive. We'll analyze that later, and find out. Now, you have the other prints?"

I produced them from the cabinet, and Maxine laid them out on a sheet of paper. He traced them carefully with a fine pencil, taking great care to reproduce every line and curve. As he worked I noticed the unusual predominance of many of the curves; they were heavy and emphatic, and showed characteristics unusual to most fingerprints. Maxine was right, this man's fingers were unusual, and I felt that I would recognize the prints among a thousand. I began to experience some of the enthusiasm of an expert; and for the first time I realized how Maxine had felt on that day when he first discovered the forefinger on the bloody rag.

They were all traced on the paper except the one imprinted on the under side of the paper of the lead pencil. In removing the strip a part of this print still remained on the pencil where the paper had broken off.

"I must get it perfect," Maxine said, picking up his knife. "I will have to remove another half-inch of the paper. It's too bad it broke off just at this point."

I stood over him as he pried and scraped carefully to avoid breaking the paper again. The brittle nature of it made the task a somewhat complicated one, for a slight break or abrasion might blot out some of the delicate lines.

"I'll dig down through the second layer," he said quietly, and plunged his knife deeper into the stiff but pliable pencil holder. He stopped suddenly and held the pencil gingerly from him. I looked up at him, but he was staring at the pencil, deep in thought, and had no eyes for me.

The next moment he hurled the pencil toward the fireplace and threw his whole weight against me, nearly knocking me over.

"Jump, Montague! Quick! The door!" he shouted.

Before I could realize the significance of his warning he was pushing and hauling me toward the door, and once through it he slammed it behind us and crouched against it in abject fear. There was a sharp muffled explosion, and the door shook on its hinges. White-lipped, Maxine stood there until the last echo of the crash had died away.

Then he softly opened the door and looked in. An acrid odor rushed out at us; the room was filled with smoke and dust, and through this we could see the wreck. The fireplace was entirely ruined, and several bricks were hurled half across the room. Splintered wood, tiles, and soot were scattered over everything, showing the force of the explosion of the deadly weapon which we had so recently been handling.

This thrilling story will be continued in the next issue of the Ledger. During the coming months many great stories will appear in these columns. If you are not already a subscriber for this paper, it will repay you to send in a year's subscription. It costs you only $1.00, and you will never regret it. Let us hear from you at once.

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GET Married—Best Matrimonial Paper Published. Mailed free. (1) The Correspondent, Toledo, Ohio.

MARRY—Best Plan on Earth. Sent Free photo of every lady member. The Pilot, Dept. 674, Marshall, Mich.

FUTURE Told, Also Past; Send Dime, Birthdate. A. B. Fay, 5730 Madison St., Chicago.

Dead Men's Rifles

(Continued from page two.)

hand; then he swore an oath so sacred that it caused his cheeks to blanch at the bare thought of ever breaking it.

"Come," said Don Ricardo, when Massingale had sworn, "help me to set this table aside."

It was done. Sanquebel removed the heavy rug from the center of the floor. With two fingers, he took up a sunken ring, and a few seconds later the American stood before a flight of stone steps that led downward into abysmal blackness.

"Who could find you in the event that we were to hide you there?' smiled the old Spaniard.

"I would be safe, I presume, from detection," mused Massingale.

The don took a candle from the brazen candlestick, motioned Massingale to follow him, and led the way down the steps of stone. The two women remained above.

Under the library there was a spacious room, walled and floored with stone. Massingale's eyes soon discovered that two wine casks were the only articles there. Upon one of these casks, the don stuck the candle, then he turned to Massingale.

"Remember that you have sworn," he said rather harshly.

From a corner of the room he removed an apparently fixed stone; and from a recess behind he drew out into the candle's dim light an iron box fitted with a heavy padlock. There came the clicking of a key, and he threw back the lid.

"Look!" he said, taking up the cradle and holding it over the chest in order that Massingale might see to a better advantage.

The American gave a gasp when he saw. He stooped, that he might see more clearly. In the iron box there was a princely fortune in gold and silver—gleaming, yellow gold and shimmering silver!

"There is no bank nearer than Manila," said the don, "and it is dangerous to carry large amounts of money on one's person, even on one's own vessel, in times like these. Now, Senor Edwin Massingale, how do you suppose I came by that money? Do you suppose that I made it by trading in copra and abaca?"

"I—I cannot say," stammered Massingale, dazed by the sight of so fine a treasure.

"I can tell you—no!" exclaimed Don Ricardo Sanquebel. "Senor Edwin Massingale, I need a partner—a red-blooded, brave partner, who can think fast and scheme. What is the quiet life to a man like you? Where, oh, where, is the romance of growing tobacco, rice, and sugar-cane, of trading in copra and abaca? Man, I tell you, had I lived in the good old days, I should have sailed the Spanish Main! You, with your vibrant, throbbing life, you were falsely accused of so low and vile a thing as stealing a few rifles and ammunition, like a common thief. Were I in your place, Senor, I should in a way make good the accusation—I should be a gun runner."

Edwin Massingale took a step backward. The don took a step toward the American.

"I am a gun runner," smiled Sanquebel. "I sell rifles to the insurrectionists for ten times their worth. You and I, working together, would soon become very rich."

"Again't my own flag!" breathed Massingale. "God forbid! No—not that, Don Ricardo Never, never that!"

He turned toward the stairway of stone. The Spaniard caught him by the arm and pulled him back.

"Hold, Senor Massingale!" he cried, in a low, tense voice. "Think of the court-martial for a thing you did not do, and of the years in a military prison. Think of the loss of a beautiful woman as a wife. You are poor, you have nothing; I am rich. I have everything that money will buy. All I have shall become yours and Flora's at my death—lands, houses, ships, gold and silver. And consider, Senor Massingale, that I am already an old man."

"You mean that I cannot marry your daughter unless I conform to your wish in this matter—even if I am cleared of the charge against me?' Massingale asked, his voice sounding dim and far away.

"Exactly," nodded the don. "If you are not willing to swallow a few of your qualms for the sake of such a woman as Flora, it would see that your affections are not very deep."

With his last words the Spaniard's face became almost belligerent. Massingale eyed him hard for a moment.

"Rather than turn against my country, Don Ricardo," he said, "I will lose everything. Once and for all, I shall never be a gun runner working against the United States. If you please, I shall return to the carcel."

Sanquebel stepped to the foot of the stairway and called his daughter. The young woman came at once, her eyes and her lips further beautified by her brilliant smile.

"Tell me,' she said, looking expectantly toward her father, "has Edwin accepted?"

"No, the monkey that he is!" growled the don.

"Ah, my Edwin!" cried Flora, approaching the American with her arms held out entreatingly. "Surely, you will accept. Will you tear down our dreams, querido? Will you break my heart? Am I not worth this sacrifice of the poor thing that men call loyalty to a country?"

Seeing no softening of Massingale's features, she covered her face with a corner of her mantilla, and sank to the floor before the American.

"You do not care for me!" she declared. "Now I know that you do not."

Massingale lifted her tenderly to her feet. His face was white. His lips trembled, and his eyes were dim.

"I wish we could see alike," he said. "You are a splendid woman, a royal woman. But our paths cannot run together. I am going back——"

A voice interrupted him. It was the dona, who was standing at the head of the stairway.

"The soldiers, Ricardo!" she cried smotheringly.

"The search has begun," Massingale observed dazedly.

"Remain here," ordered Sanquebel, gruffly, and bolted up the steps.

Massingale heard the trapdoor fall, heard the don and his wife placing the rug and the table in their former positions. The Senorita Flora extinguished the candle, found Massingale's hand, and led him through the abysmal darkness to the stone stairway, where they sat down.

"Let us listen," whispered the young woman, and pressed the American's hand very gently.

Shortly afterward they heard the tramp of heavy feet above them, and then there came to their ears, smotheredly yet distinctly, the sound of Captain Rutherford's voice:

"And the fact that he has fled removes the last doubt from my mind that he is guilty," the officer was saying. "You haven't see him, Don Ricardo?"

"No," came the answer of the old Spaniard. "He has not been here. But you may search the house if you care to, Senor."

"I shall not do that; your word is sufficient," was the Captain's reply.

The speakers moved from the room. Their voices ran on, but Massingale and his companion could not catch the import of their conversation any further.

"Do you not see, Edwin?' whispered Flora, putting her soft, warm arms about the American's neck. "Do you not see that your only hope lies in accepting my father's offer?"

Massingale stared into the blackness with wide and burning eyes. He did not speak.

"You cannot refuse!" Flora went on in her sirenlike voice.

"Wouldn't you marry me without your father's consent?" Massingale finally asked. "I mean," he added, "if I am proved innocent?"

"Without my father's consent!" exclaimed the Spanish beauty. "You do not know my father, Edwin. When he is angry, he is a terrible man! I could not wed you without his consent."

Massingale sank back heavily against the wall. The woman followed him, her arms still about his neck, her sweet, warm breath upon his face. Again and again she pleaded; but Massingale would give no affirmative answer.

But Massingale was tempted. And the temptation was strong, fascinating; in all his life it seemed to him now, he had never wanted anything, or loved anything, but this one lovely woman. And with her was wealth, great wealth—and safety from the clutches of military law, safety from a military prison and the attendant disgrace. He wondered if it were not really better to accept——

"Say that you will!" pleaded Flora's entrancing, velvet voice, and she kissed him on the cheek.

Massingale barely caught himself. He summoned all the strength within him, took his temptress by the shoulders, and put her from him.

"I cannot," he declared, his voice hoarse and throbbing. "I cannot be a gun runner for the insurrectionists. To go to prison is as bitter as a cup of poison. Hades holds no sorrow, no torture, half so great as the loss of you. But I cannot be a gun runner."

He rose on the steps, his head touching the door above. The woman also rose.

"But what shall you do?" she asked. "Do you think that my father will allow you to go free to reveal his secret to your countrymen?'"

Massingale pushed the trapdoor upward, upsetting the mahogany table and spilling a number of books and papers to the floor. Then he rushed out of the house by a rear door, scaled the wall, and hastened through the night to the carcel. He was once more a prisoner; but he was certainly not a gun runner.

He slept but a few minutes that night. The dawn broke clear. The palm fronds were sparkling with drops of rain caught from a slight shower that had fallen during the night; the scent of many tropical flowers was in the air.

An hour later, the measured tramp of many feet broke upon Massingale's ears. He went to the high, barred window that faced the company quarters building.

Marching across the palm-lined square, coming toward him with shouldered rifles, was the company—preceded by the Captain and his two lieutenants, and the three Sanquebels!

When the company had halted and grounded arms before the old carcel, its commanding officer requested the corporal of the guard to bring Private Massingale forth. Massingale came, wondering.

Captain Rutherford explained:

"Massingdale, Don Ricardo prevailed upon me to put the former presidente, Minio Borja, through a sort of 'third degree'; this resulted in Borja's confession to the effect that he stole the rifles and ammunition by means of a loose window Then the don, the dona, and their daughter, being much interested in you, wanted to see of just what sort of mettle you were made—it was a test, Massingdale; and your may thank your stars that you did not accept the don's generous offer!'

He handed Edwin Massingale a folded paper. It was an honorable discharge. And as the three Sanquebels and their American smilingly moved away, the company presented arms.

* * *

Unimportant.

To some men, who face the matrimonial altar for the first time the experience is confusing and exciting. A certain military officer told the following story regarding his conduct when he enacted the part of the "happy man."

Previous to his marriage he had been in several battles and had had many harrowing experiences, through all of which he kept his courage and remained as calm as a brave man should. As the time for the bridal ceremony came on, however, his calmness gradually gave way. At the altar, amid the blaze of a full military wedding, the officer was utterly confused, and what went on seemed very much mixed to him. Fearing the excitement of the moment would temporarily take him off his feet, the officer had learned the marriage ceremony letter perfect, as he thought, and he remembered repeating the words after the minister in a mechanical sort of way.

After the ceremony was over and all were serene again, including the officer's state of mind, the clergyman came up to him and touched him on the shoulder.

"Pardon me, Captain Brown," he said, "but you omitted to endow your wife with your worldly goods."

"What's that?" asked the bridegroom, with something of astonishment in his voice.

"Why, I repeated the sentence, 'With all my worldly goods I thee endow' several times, and, despite my efforts, you would not say it after me!"

The bridegroom seemed perturbed for a moment, and then his face beamed.

"Never mind, sir," he said, "she didn't lose a blessed thing by it."

* * *

The best a man can do is to guess at the age of women and canned goods.

ECZEMA BOOK FREE

The National Skin Hospital, located at 104 Main Street, St. Joseph, Mo., who treat skin diseases only, have published a book of more than sixty pages which they are mailing free to anyone writing for it. It has many colored plates showing the different forms of skin diseases and tells how they can be treated at home. Anyone interested should write for it at once.

* * *

Those suffering from weakness and lack of vigor should take JUVEN PILLS. One box will tell a story of marvelous results. This medicine has more rejuvenating, vitalizing force than has ever before been offered. Sent postpaid only on receipt of this advertisement and $1. Made by its originators, C. I. Hood Co., proprietors Hood's Sarsaparilla, LOWELL, MASS. (a)

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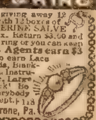

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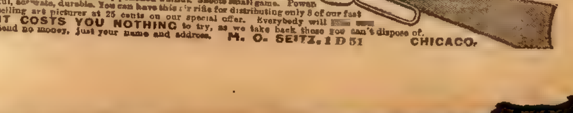

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Chicago Ledger

Entered as second-class matter June 25, 1885, at the postoffice at Chicago, Illinois, under act of March 3, 1879.

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COPIES WEEKLY.

GENTLE JABS

A theory is always all right until tried.

Yet well-groomed men may lack horse sense.

If you leap before you look, you look foolish.

Doing things for effect is seldom effective.

Cruel words seldom cut lazy people to the quick.

Most of us admire a fool as long as he has money.

It's always too early to rip, but never too late to mend.

If you would get up in the world, get down to business.

Poverty keeps lots of us from making fools of ourselves.

Men frequently see visions—of the blonde or brunette type.

When fiction gets busy facts become ashamed of themselves.

While engaged in loving your enemies, don't slight your friends.

Love is the bread of life to a woman; to a man it is merely cake.

Look not upon the wine when it is red—nor the rum when it is bay.

Most of us are hard of hearing when the still small voice gets busy.

Deaf mutes must be a noisy lot if actions speak louder than words.

Even the miser is willing to share his good opinion of himself with others.

Only a newly married man ever dodges when his wife throws things at him.

Horrible examples are the kind a schoolboy encounters in his arithmetic.

A strong-minded man is one who has occasion to say "I told you so" and doesn't.

Young man, beware of the girl who looks like a peach. She may be a lemon in disguise.

If a man worries about his debts it's a sign that he is honest; the dishonest man lets the other fellow worry.

An old man who suffers from dyspepsia has but little sympathy for a young woman who merely has a broken heart.

And many a misguided young man seems to think that stepping stones are merely something to throw at the birds.

In case you fail to put your best foot forward when you have a chance, you may feel like using it to kick yourself later.

Young man, think twice before attempting to kindle a flame in a woman's heart. It may cost you a lot for fuel to keep the fire going.

PEPPERS

John Henry Wasn't Hungry.

They were speaking of the wonderful days of courtship when a young man willingly makes a million sacrifices to appear like great wealth in the dear one's beautiful eyes. A merry chuckle on the part of Governor Locke Craig of North Carolina who was one of the dinner party. He said he was reminded of the case of John Henry.

John Henry, according to the Governor, took the darling of his heart to a cafe where it is expensive to eat. The dear one had said she wasn't hungry, so the young lover thought he would escape with no greater blow than an ice-cream ticket.

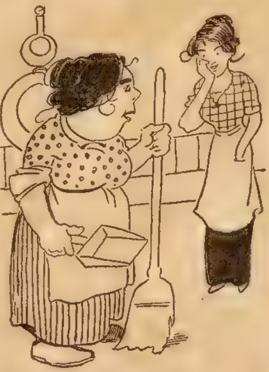
But, alas! Likewise woe! It was a pheasant that the dear one ordered, with fixings to match. All that John Henry could do was to watch her and suffer.

"Jackey, dear," she sweetly remarked, diving into the luscious bird, "you are not eating a bit of this pheasant. Won't you have some?"

"No, darling," responded John Henry. "I have had all that I want."

"All that you want, dear!" exclaimed the young woman, showing great surprise. "Why, you haven't had any!"

"Yes, I have sweet," answered John Henry, with something akin to a soulful sigh. "The waiter just handed me the bill."



The Cook—"Shure an' Mr. and Mrs. Murphy had a foine little scrap las' week."

Lady of House—"Did they separate?"

The Cook—"Yis, but it took noine people to separate thim."

A Liar Discovered.

Weedon Grossmith used to tell a good story about a play by Robert Ganthony, which that gentleman asked him to read. Mr. Grossmith took the comedy, but lost it on his way home.

"Night after night," he said, "I would meet Ganthony, and he would ask me how I liked his play. It was awful; the perspiration used to come out on my forehead as I'd say sometimes: 'I haven't had time to look at it yet!' or again, 'The first act was good, but I can't stop to explain,' et cetera, 'must catch a train.' That play was the bane of my existence and haunted me even in my dreams."

Some months passed, and Ganthony, a merry wag, still pursued him without mercy. At last it occurred to Mr. Grossmith that he might have left the comedy in the cab on the night it was given to him. He inquired at Scotland Yard.

"Oh, yes," was the reply. "Play marked with Mr. Ganthony's name, sent back to owner four months ago, as soon as found."

A Valuable Baby.

There never was such a baby; there never was, never has been, and never would be under any conceivable circumstances on earth.

"Molly, my love," cried daddy, bouncing in upon his seven-year-old, "Uncle George has just arrived, and he's enraptured. He said, 'There never was such a baby,' and he offered to buy her for five dollars an ounce."

"You're not going to sell her, are you?" asked Molly, with wide-open eyes.

"No, my precious!" cried the delighted father, embracing her affectionately over this show of proper sentiment.

"Because," resumed Molly, "she'll be heavier when she's older and'll fetch more!"

He Certainly Knew.

"Speaking of juvenile witnesses," remarked Joseph H. Choate, at a recent social function, "I am reminded of the great embarrassment that once fell to the lot of a judicial friend of mine.

"The judge in question was presiding over a very important trial, when a rather small boy was placed on the witness stand, and, naturally, the judge was assailed with doubt as to whether he was competent to testify.

"'How old are you, my little man?'" asked the judge, in a kindly tone, turning to the diminutive witness.

"'Fourteen, sir,' answered the youngster, 'but I am small for my age.'

"'Yes, I see,' returned the judge. 'Do you understand the nature of an oath?'

"'Well, I should say so!' was the startling rejoinder of the youngster. 'I have caddied for you two or three times, sir.'"

Not a Thunder Expert.

The masterful manner in which some people evade an issue was mentioned at a recent dinner when this one was recalled by Rear Admiral Philip Andrews:

"In New Orleans one night," the Admiral said, "there was a man on the stage who offered to answer, by mental arithmetic, any question that might be asked by the audience.

"Just as long as the questioner remained in the expected channel the sailing was easy, but finally one man got beyond the bearings.

"'If you please, sir,' said the man, rising from his seat. 'How far off can you hear thunder?'

"'I can't tell you, sir,' was the prompt response of the wonder on the stage.

"'You can't tell me?' responded the man. 'Why, I thought——'

"'Not about thunder,' replied the stage party, doing a quick piece of dodging. 'You see, I am a lightning calculator.'"

Not Thinking of Matrimony.

Leon Hornstein, assistant corporation counsel, met an old friend from the West in the Congress Hotel in Chicago. The man from the West was delayed on a trip to the East by snowstorms, and the lawyer was representing the mayor at a convention of some sort.

The meeting, unexpected as it was, was the first time the two had seen each other in several years. After the first greeting they retired to an appropriate corner and began to talk things over.

"Well, Harry," said Mr. Hornstein, after a bit, "are you thinking of getting married?"

The other shook his head slowly.

"It's great stuff!" exclaimed Mr. Hornstein. "I wish you'd change your mind about that some day. I'd be mighty glad to have you choose a wife."

Still the other shook his head.

"No," said he. "It's too late."

"Bosh," said Mr. Hornstein. "You're a young fellow and——"

"I know," responded the other; "but I was married last year."

Why They Smiled.

An elderly church warden in shaving himself one Sunday before church time made a slight cut with the razor on the extreme end of his nose. Quickly calling his wife, he asked her if she had any court plaster in the house.

"You will find some in my sewing basket," she said.

The warden soon had the cut covered. At the church in assisting with the collection he noticed every one smile as he passed the plate, and some of the younger people laughed outright. Very much annoyed, he asked a friend if there was anything wrong with his appearance.

"Well, I should think there is," was the answer. "What is that on your nose?"

"Court plaster."

"No," said his friend; "it is the label of a spool of cotton. It says, 'Warranted two hundred yards long.'"

Won His Bet.

A hotel proprietor in Baltimore tells an amusing story in which the main figure is an old gentleman well known to the waiters in the hotels of the Monumental city for his aversion to the "tipping" system.

One evening the old gentleman, having finished his dinner, was preparing to leave the hotel, when the darky who had served him bowed and said, "Thank you very much, sah."

"What the deuce are you thanking me for?" angrily demanded the old fellow. "I haven't given you anything."

"Dat's jest it, boss," responded the waiter, "I bet No. 10 fifty cents dat you wouldn't 'tip' me."

Correcting a Gusher.

Bret Harte was so frequently complimented as the author of "Little Breeches" that he was almost as sorry as was Colonel John Hay, the real author of the verses, who preferred his fame to rest on more ambitious works. A gushing lady who prided herself upon her literary taste said to him once:

"My dear Mr. Harte, I am so delighted to meet you. I have read everything you ever wrote, but of all your dialect verse there is none that compares with your 'Little Breeches.'"

"I quite agree with you, madam," said Mr. Harte, "but you have put the little breeches on the wrong man."

Young, but Discreet.

A certain man, who lives in a suburban town in north Jersey, is no beauty. He is not only long and angular, but has a face and complexion that neither pale blue, sky yellow, nor any other color in dress effect, will attune to.

One day the aforesaid party called to see an acquaintance, and while waiting for him to appear in the parlor was entertained by the little eight-year-old son.

"Well, what do you think of me?" asked the caller, after conversing several minutes.

Instead of replying the boy turned aside and thoughtfully hung his head.

"You haven't answered me," smilingly persisted the caller. "Aren't you going to tell me what you think of me?"

"No, sir," returned the youngster. "Do you suppose that I want to get a licking?"

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Jack Sewell's Fortunes

Or, Among the Pearl Islands

By St. George Rathborne

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CHAPTER IV.
THE INDIAN CAMP.

"LOOK, they are Indians," said Jack, as they passed some of these shacks, and could catch a good survey of those who hovered over the fire, attending to the rude culinary operations.

They were women, with unkempt hair, wearing garments that Jack thought would have well become gypsies, from the brilliant colors used; and their dark faces betrayed their Indian blood.

It was evidently an encampment of roving natives, who took the place of the gypsies seen in other climes, trading horses, perchance telling the fortunes of dainty Mexican maidens in their homes. Negrito belonged here by rights, for these seemed to be the Indians of the Mosquito Coast, wanderers and nomads that they were, far removed from their own country.

Pepito proudly led his two patrons through the intricate mazes of the camp, and finally landed them in front of a more imposing shack than any of its neighbors. As he raised his shrill voice in a cry, a figure appeared in the doorway, and Jack jumped forward with an exclamation.

Negrito, for it was indeed the chief, was a man of remarkable features, and his wrinkled face seemed a strange mixture of cunning and nobility. He was a giant among pygmies when compared with the average Mosquito Coast Indian, and had his surroundings been of a higher order it might be that the man would have risen to some distinction, for he possessed traits of character along the same order that have made Napoleons and Cesars and Washingtons.

The ancient worthy recognized Jack well immediately. His wrinkled face broke into a grin, and he hastened to advance so that he might greet this young friend halfway; the grasp of his bony hand was cordial to a degree, and Jack knew the Indian remembered his vow. He hastened to present Oscar, and in a few sentences told how they had chosen to desert from the vessel where they were being inhumanly treated.

"You told me to come, and I am here, chief," he said, in conclusion.

Negrito wagged his head and a look of infinite cunning passed over his face.

"Yes, it is time," he said simply, but there was a world of meaning in the words; for as he spoke to them he looked around from one side to the other with a caution that Oscar compared to the manner of a fox that scents the hounds.

Pepito was still hovering near, eying Jack expectantly; and knowing what was in his mind, the boy held out some coins, which sent the other away with happiness beaming from his hungry-looking countenance.

"Enter here," said Negrito, indicating the doorway of his hut, and without the slightest hesitation the two lads obeyed.

It was gloomy within, but the chief lighted a rush candle at the fire without and fastened this upon the wall. He left them for a brief space of time, evidently to post guards around the shanty so that no spy could creep up and overhear what might be said within; for he had much to say to his guests, and expected to hear more in return.

"Think hof living like this!" whispered Oscar, with a shudder, as he glanced around and noted the primitive arrangement of the shack's interior. He had been a rover pretty much all his life, but even aboard the worst old hooker of his experience Oscar had never had to exist amid such filthy surroundings as now greeted their eyes.

"Don't mention it," said Jack hastily; "and pay no attention to such things. It would offend the chief. All his life he's lived like a dog, only he doesn't know it, for he never had any better home. It will be different if we go sailing with him on the gulf, for a boat can be kept clean; but one of these shacks is another thing. Hush! He's coming back!"

Negrito sat down near them and began to talk. He had mingled with white men for many years down along the coast of Panama, and could speak fairly good English, though tripping up on a word now and then. Soon he had heard all Jack could tell him, and from the way he gritted his white teeth when Senor Jose and the captain of the rurales were mentioned it was plain to see that he understood the meaning of their alliance, as well as the keen interest old Pedro took in his young guests as soon he learned that they sought one Negrito. It was soon expl[illegible]

Senor Jose, while a wealthy hidalgo, was an exceedingly covetous man. Somehow he had got on the track of the fact that Negrito held a famous secret concerning a bag of magnificent pearls that had been hidden away in some sort of cache in the pearl-fishing territory of the great and mysterious California Gulf; and from that day up to the present he had played his cards with the idea of forcing or coaxing the secret from the old chief.

It had taken such a hold upon the other that he was wild upon the subject, and ready to spend much time and money, if only the object of his ambition might be finally accomplished. He tried threats, and they fell harmless; then he had offered bribes, but Negrito treated them with disdain, for why should he condescend to accept only the equivalent of a small share of the prize when the secret was his alone.

Finally the don had resorted to strategy, and having set spies upon the track of the Mosquito Indian, he awaited the turn of events, confident that where such dogged persistence was concerned there could be but one outcome. And he was evidently getting his forces in order for some sort of a bold move just at the time Jack and his comrade hove in sight.

"I have expected you," said Negrito, in conclusion; "for you promised to come within the year, and it will be that long in another week. And I have been making all things ready for our jornada up toward the north. Let Senor Jose follow if he please. There are strange passages and inlets among the islands along the coast, and we can lose our noble hidalgo as easy as that," and he snapped his fingers disdainfully.

Jack was pleased to hear him speak thus confidently, for he had begun to fear that with the power of a rich schemer to buck up against they might find it rather rough sledding.

Long and earnestly did they converse with Negrito. The old chief asked innumerable questions, and told them a multitude of things that would serve to govern their future movements.

"He thinks you will go with me. I do not believe he would stop you, if he was able, for he has long been waiting for this thing, when Negrito sails for the tierra caliente, and the hiding-place of the great pearl treasure. No, he will wait and follow, and that is what we want. You are safe, caballeros, even in the posada of that treacherous dog, Pedro Agrillo, whom the devil protects," was the way he wound up his words of advice.

Negrito asked them to stay and join him in his meal, and while Jack declared they had eaten before leaving the tavern, he could not resist waiting, such was the interest he felt in all that pertained to the peculiar old Indian. Evidently his word was law in that little community, for all obeyed the slightest command he chose to give utterance to.

When he had eaten, waited on by humble retainers, the chief led the way down to the water, which was close by, and there in a creek they found a boat, which belonged to a nondescript class never before seen by either of the boys. Had they traveled abroad and cruised along the shore of northern Africa, they might have discovered some resemblance between the boat of Negrito and an Arab felucca, for the sails had the same rakish look, and the whole craft was built after a piratical model, fitted for great speed as well as safety.

The chief later on disclosed the fact that it had been built for him by an exiled Moorish sailor, whom he had befriended; and loud were the praises he bestowed upon the little vessel, so foreign to these waters that it was an object of curiosity to all men.

Our young friends being sailors could understand the sailing qualities of the boat, especially with such a large spread of canvas; and they explored its interior with unusual interest and many exclamations of delight, for it began to look as though they were destined to spend many weeks, possibly months, on this craft, and its various possibilities in the line of speed and comfort appealed strongly to them.

They found that it was stocked with provisions and other things as if for a long cruise; and this made them remember that Negrito had said he was anticipating the coming of Jack about this time.

Things began to take on an aspect of reality, yet it was hard for the boys to realize that they were on the eve of starting upon an adventure that partook of the nature of romance—Oscar in particular seemed to be a doubter, for he had his comrade pinch him several times to see whether he were dreaming, or things were what they seemed. Oscar had not found life an easy proposition, and he had grown so accustomed to looking upon good things as apples hanging just out of his reach that it was no wonder he found it hard to realize what wonderful results might spring from this adventure.

"I see you have a guard on board, Negrito. Do you fear that your enemies might try to steal this fine boat?" asked Jack, pointing to the squatty Indian who sat on his crossed legs near the bow of the felucca, and caressed an enormous musket of an antique pattern.

"That would not surprise me, senor. Don Jose is without honor, when it comes to money; and he is crazy about this story of the pearls. It has been a great sorrow to me, amigos, that he ever learned about it; but all these months his dreams have only been of finding the treasure that has lain for many years up in that cache along the shore of the gulf. Carramba! how many have gone out to search for it, and how few have come back! Some were drowned in the sudden storm that springs up without warning in the treacherous gulf; others fell victims to the fierce head-hunters of the terrible island where the white man dares never to explore; but only one man lives who knows where the treasure loot is lying, and that man is here!" with which Negrito gave his lean chest a thump.

It was very dramatic, and the boys were duly impressed.

Shortly after they said farewell for a short season to the chief. It was arranged that Pepito should lead them back to the inn of Pedro once more, and that on the morrow, after they had eaten breakfast and paid their reckoning, the same half-blood would come for them. His appearance was to be the sign that Negrito had studied the heavens, and decided the time propitious for their departure.

Accordingly they each in turn gravely shook hands with the chief, and then Pepito, who was waiting nearby, took them in charge; nor did they find the least trouble in arriving safely at the tavern, though several strolling leperos looked askance at them on the way, and but for a mysterious motion from their swarthy guide might have attempted to hold them up, when trouble would certainly have followed, for neither Jack nor Oscar chanced to be built upon the submissive plan, and were both accustomed to giving a good account of themselves in an emergency.

CHAPTER V.
SAILING OF THE FELUCCA.

PEDRO eyed them curiously when they appeared in his place once more. He evidently wondered what had happened, and if his hopeful son had managed to accomplish anything in the interests of his lord and master, the don. However, he could deceive when he chose, and his manner was as deferential as ever when he asked if the senors would like any particular dish served for their breakfast.

Oscar grinned at this display of affability, and immediately requested several favorite West India foods which were

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unknown to Pedro, who shrugged his shoulders and apologized for not being able to supply the same; but he ould have some magnificent baked tortillas; and there were always choice hot tomales, and frijoles if the senors were inclined that way.

The two lads soon left him and went to the squalid room where they were to pass the night. They could put up with considerable, being rovers from away back, and hence their sleep was not apt to be interfered with because the sheet upon the bed was not entirely clean. So long as mosquitoes and all other cannibal insects could be kept at bay, they fancied they were well able to get a stretch of sound sleep before the sun popped up again for another scorching day

Jack saw to it that the flimsy door was barricaded against the possible coming of a thief in the night. True, they did not have much worth taking, but it was their all and therefore valuable: and then again, it is always unpleasant to be aroused from a sound sleep and find a skulking figure in the room, emptying out the contents of one's pockets—a single experience in that line, encountered a few months before at Belize, was enough for Jack.

Oscar looked out of the window. He seemed to have been thinking that there might come an intruder from this source, for he immediately exclaimed:

"Heasy done hif a chap 'ad a ladder. Hand, d'ye twig that tree close by? Hi think hit wouldn't be 'ard to cross hover from that lower branch. Hi'll be jiggered hif Hi do. Watch me harrange hit, hold cock."

What did he do but fasten a cord back and forth across the opening, so as to form a network, very like a spider's web.

"Hi shall fasten one hend of the cord to me big toe, hand hif hany beggar tries to crawl hinto the room hit will harouse me hinstanter. You see Hi 'ave played the same game before, hand with 'owlin' success," he explained.

"Oh, then," said Jack, grinning, "this is an encore. Well, I don't see why it won't work; only if you find yourself going in the middle of the night, please don't grab me. A sudden shock might be fatal to my nerves. What will you do if a visitor comes?"

Oscar laid a stout cudgel which he had picked up somewhere, alongside the bed, caressing it fondly the while in a suggestive manner.

"Heaven help the poor devil if you get a rap at him with that shillalah!" remarked Jack, preparing to partly disrobe.

Thus they were enabled to have fresh air in the stuffy little place all night, and at the same time felt secure from intrusion, thanks to the ingenuity of the Conch.

Jack half expected to have their sleep disturbed by some wild clamor, while his chum rolled off the bed and made for the window, club in hand; but to his satisfaction this did not happen, and when he opened his eyes it was growing daylight.

They got up early, for the cool of the dawn is the finest part of the whole day in this hot country; and besides, there could be no telling when Negrito might send for them.

Pedro was on deck when they went downstairs, and looked curiously at them, but not with the same anxiety he had exhibited on the preceding night.

"Undoubtedly the brave captain has been home to report what is in the wind; and our landlord knows there is going to be a hot chase, with a possibility of his patron, Senor Jose, snatching the pearls away from us after Negrito had led us to their secret hiding-place. Yes, Pedro looks as though he held a weighty secret, and is bursting with importance. The old scent for loot has been aroused again, and I wouldn't be surprised if he went along with the don on the jaunt," observed Jack, after watching the actions of the landlord a while.

Having arranged their plans, they cared no longer what Pedro, his worthy offspring, the rurales captain, or Senor Jose might do, so long as they made no serious attempt to detain them; and Negrito had explained how that must be the last idea that would come into the scheming head of Senor Jose, because it would simply balk the sailing of the expedition, which was exactly what he did not want to occur.

They had not been through the morning meal more than half an hour when the grinning Pepito hove up along the horizon, and made mysterious gestures calculated to influence them to accompany him once more. So they settled the accounting with Pedro, who wished them many good things, though the glow in his avaricious old eyes told that he was thinking much more than he cared to put in words.

Again they wended their way through the crooked streets of Mazatlan, heading for the outskirts, and though Jack glanced around several times, he failed to see any signs of spies near by. If Senor Jose expected them to slip away from Mazatlan on this day, he had made his preparations for following them, and did not care to bother with any espionage ashore.

So without any trouble they came to the place where the hovels of the Indians squatted like great toads upon the ground, looking more dilapidated and uncanny in the broad sunlight than when the gloaming mercifully covered their squalor.

Negrito was awaiting them. Seen in the daylight he was a tall, lean, yet muscular old native, with a sort of dignity about him that impressed Oscar considerably; he had been accustomed to looking down upon all these aborigines with deepest scorn, but found it impossible to treat this venerable white-headed chief with anything save respect. Oscar was inclined to levity, too, but he would as soon have thought of addressing King George familiarly as of calling Negrito "old cock" or "me covey."

"We sail when the tide changes. That will be in one hour, senors," was the announcement with which the old chief met them.

"How is the wind?" asked Jack, turning to look through the thicket toward the water, which could be seen in places.

"It favors us well. We shall fly like the vampire bat, and before the storm awakens the evil spirits of the deep, we must be safe among the islands and harbors many miles up the coast. It is a long chase, and Senor Jose will grow sick many times before it is ended. I have prepared for everything. We can laugh at our enemies, senors. So go aboard, and make your minds easy. Negrito will pay his debt to his preserver, and mock his enemies to scorn. It may be the bold hidalgo will be known no more in the casa he calls home. His widow will not weep many tears, for he is a hard master. Come, amigos, let us embark. My feet are eager to be pressing the water trail to the country of the pearl fisheries."

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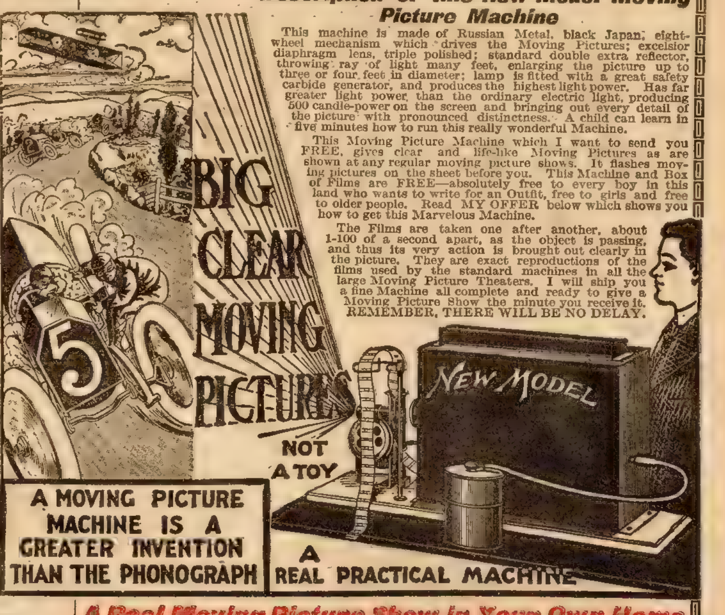
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All the village gathered to see them off, and a motley crowd it was. Jack had seen some strange gatherings in his time, but this certainly exceeded them all in many ways, and he would often recall it to mind with a smile.

But they were faithful vassals of Negrito, for they indulged in various dances peculiar to their tribe, and which Jack judged were offered up as a propitiation to the Great Spirit of the deep, begging for the safe return of the mighty one who intrusted his life to the keeping of the genii.

Weird as the tomtoms sounded, together with the screeching, monotonous vocal music, the boys could not be otherwise than impressed by the intensity of the feeling exhibited by the actors, male and female alike, who went through with their various stunts as though their very lives depended upon their faithful observance.

It grew tiresome after a while, and Jack, at least, was well pleased when he knew the hour had passed, and that from the bustle on board it seemed they were about to make a move looking toward sailing.

"What sort of a bally crew hare we going to 'ave haboard the junk, matey?" said Oscar, beginning to stretch himself with the eagerness of impending action.

"There's only one fellow aboard now, besides Negrito and ourselves, and he's the fat duck who was carrying the cannon yesterday. I wonder if he has that ridiculous thing with him. If he tries to shoot it off, I'd be afraid of the whole taut little ship keeling over with the recoil. I bet it hasn't been fired for ten years."

Oscar shrugged his broad shoulders as if he cared little about that—being a veritable water duck he always depended upon having the whole ocean to swim in should there come a time when his boat failed him. It was hard to frighten the West India sailor with any sort of peril usually encountered on the deep, for he had tried them all, and come out victorious.

Our friends had ere now made a close examination of the boat, and especially her sails, so that they were ready to take hold and put her through her paces with just as much ease as though all their lives they had been sailing in just such a queer craft.

No sooner did they shoot out of the creek, and into the little bay back of the jagged point of rock protecting Mazatlan harbor, than both lads felt like giving a wild shout of exhilaration, for never had they known quite the same feeling of free flight as when the rakish craft began fairly to skim the surface of the water, heading out to sea.

How different from the wallowing of the ugly blunt-nosed old brigantine Casabianca, as she thrust her bows under each opposing wave, and threw the water off in rising like an anchored lightship hulk. This was the personification of motion, and made the blood dance through the veins like hot lava, with the buoyancy of youth back of it all.

Looking back to the shore they had just left Jack saw the whole conglomeration of tribesmen down on their knees, and with extended arms sending their rude blessings, after the chief whose will they found it a pleasure to obey. It was as if they would thus waft after him their best wishes for a safe voyage and a speedy return.

Jack had watched many scenes where friends were wishing bon voyage to those about to sail hence; but somehow the simplicity and earnestness of these rude bronzed children of the coast impressed him as never had the cheers and waving handkerchiefs of civilized mankind.

Negrito stood and posed at the mast until they were beyond the turn of the projecting neck of land, when he consented to resume his normal condition, and take an interest in the enterprise upon which they were at last fully embarked. Whatever lay in the past, the future now stretched before them, and such was the beauty of the day, the dazzling water dimpling in the morning breeze, and the salty taste of the sea in their nostrils, that both lads felt as though victory must already be in sight, ready to be taken by the mere outstretched hand.

Had they been older they would have known better than to have underestimated the power and dogged determination of the men who had sworn to possess those treasures of the gulf, to find which they were now heading due north.

CHAPTER VI.

OVER THE BLUE SEA.

IT WAS only natural for Jack to take a sweeping survey of the whole coast line as soon as the felucca had made an offing, and they could see for miles up and down the shore. He was looking for signs of Senor Jose.

A few fishing boats might be seen putting out for the day. Yes, and there was a smudge of black smoke along the horizon to the south, telling where the regular steamer from Panama was making up, expecting to put in at Mazatlan for a portion of her cargo; for this is something of a shipping port for the interior, where a rich country lies and various crops as well as cattle abound. As yet there did not appear to be any signs of the enemy.

To the surprise and delight of the boys Negrito now came on deck bearing in his hands an old brass-bound telescope, of the pattern used by our great-grandfathers, at a time when the modern binocular was quite unknown. Still, it had a mighty nautical look, and reminded Jack of some of the sea stories he remembered reading.

Upon adjusting the telescope to his eye, Jack was pleased to find it was a pretty fair article, for it showed up the line of coast in great shape, and he was able to make out many objects that were next to invisible to the naked eye. Accordingly he sat down upon a coil of rope and proceeded to comb the shore line, in the effort to locate the expected pursuer.

"What cheer, messmate?" demanded Oscar, coming up from handling some of the ropes that needed stowing to give the little vessel the shipshape appearance so dear to the eye of the sailor who has been used to system.

"I think I've spotted the rascal," answered Jack. "Here, take a squint through the glass and tell me what you think. Just two points off the weather side of the lighthouse on the reef—d'ye see a little column of light smoke getting heavier every minute? What d'ye make out of it, Oscar?"

Oscar glued his eye to the funnel.

"'Ow d'ye use the bally thing, shipmate? Blow me hif Hi hever 'andled such a bloomin' thing hafore. Cawn't see a blessed thing. Hi'll be jiggered, hif Hi can!" he bawled.

Jack laughed uproariously.

"Oh, just slide that little brass shield back, and that opens the eye-piece. Then chuck it to your right eye, and close the left one. Now, can you see anything?" he demanded.

Oscar swept the telescope around, scanning the shore line, and letting loose a string of exclamations of pleasure, until he covered the point to which Jack had directed his attention, when he became silent for a minute.

"Bloom hit hall!" he said, as he took the glass down from his eye, and turned to look at his friend. "That's the pirate, has sure has you're born. E's got a steam tug or a craft hof some kind wot goes by steam, hand 'e's a-goin' to give hus a run for hour money. Hi say, Jack, me covey, hit promises to be some hexiciting hon this 'ere trip, eh?"

"It does so," replied the other, soberly; for he knew that under many conditions the pursuing craft, urged on by steam, and free from the fickle favors of a capricious breeze, would have a decided advantage over them.

Something of the same sort seemed to strike the lanky Conch about that time, as his next words proved.

"Supposin' the bloomin' beggars did surround hus hafter we'd gone hand scooped hin the shekels in the shape hof them shiny pearls, hare we hin a condition to stand the bally pirates hoff?" he asked, cocking his eye dubiously at Jack, in a comical way he had of doing.

"That depends on how many of them there are on the boat. We have guns aboard, for they are hanging on the cabin walls, and I warrant old Negrito knows enough about firearms to have ammunition for the same. There are three guns, and one of them a fairly decent Marlin rifle, at least it looked like the one the captain had at the time I saved old Negrito. Some one told me the chief had called that weapon the voice of the Great Spirit, talking in thunder tones, and that he had given much gold dust to the captain for its possession. I shall be tickled to death to get my hands on an old friend, for I know how true it sends its lead."

"That pleases me, hold sport. Hif there's going to be a bloody row, Hi want to have me claws hon a good old Snider hor han Henfield, anything that's English, you know. I fawncy, hold toff, Jose will be jolly well stumped hif 'e bucks hup hag'in' hus."

They took turns in watching the other vessel make a start. As she came from behind the point they could make her out to be a jaunty-looking steam yacht, and Jack remembered seeing such a craft anchored in the harbor at the time he took a survey of the place the morning after their escape from the brigantine.

This, then, was the boat which Senor Jose owned, and which he had kept provisioned and ready all these days and weeks, waiting for a chance to follow Negrito to the secret cache of the pearl treasure.

The contrast was not of a character to inspire confidence in an observing person; but it often happens that victories are won by the men behind the guns, rather than by a preponderance of heavy metal; and Jack had only to look again at the grim figure of the old Coast Indian, standing there with the wind blowing through his long white hair and an expression of disdain upon his strong features, to understand that he was not depending alone upon the swiftness of his craft to outwit the cunning enemy. Negrito had the appearance of a man who held several good cards up his sleeve; and who could afford to observe the grand preparations of his enemy with contempt.

Somehow that look inspired renewed confidence in Jack's heart. It told of the indomitable will back of that stern face,

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Stuart's Dyspepsia Tablets go into your stomach just like food. They help digest this food. Then they enrich the blood and thus when the next meal is eaten the system is better prepared to do its work without assistance or at least less harmfully.

By following this natural habit you will in a short time correct stomach trouble, do away with indigestion and remove all danger of fatal digestion troubles.

Stuart's Dyspepsia Tablets are the best tablets made. They are composed of the very best natural ingredients, one grain of one element will digest 3,000 grains of meats, fish, vegetables, grains, soup, etc.

Always take a Stuart's Dyspepsia Tablet after meals or just before bed time. By doing this you will be acting wisely and playing safe.

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Let me teach YOU Rag-Time Piano Playing by MAIL. You learn EASILY—in just a few lessons AT HOME. My system is so simple you'll play Mendelssohn's Wedding March in the fifth lesson. You'll say

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Send lock of hair and I will mail a 22-inch, short stem, fine human hair switch to match. Choice, natural wavy or straight hair. A big bargain. Remit $2 in ten days or sell three and Get Your Switch Free. Extra shades a little more. Enclose 5c postage. Write today for free beauty book of latest styles of hair dressing, high grade switches, puffs, wigs, pompadours. Bargains in Ostrich Feathers. Women agents wanted. ANNA AYERS, Dept. K[illegible], 220 S. State St., Chicago.

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To introduce our Celebrated PRAIRIE ROSE and Famous FLAG STAFF WHISKIES to the readers of the Ledger, we will give, for a limited time, FREE OF CHARGE, 2 FULL QUARTS of the FLAG STAFF with a shipment of 1 gallon of PRAIRIE ROSE (in glass jug or full quart bottles as preferred). The price of the PRAIRIE ROSE is $3.60 per gallon. The price of the FLAG STAFF is $1.50 per quart.

THIS IS OUR OFFER

4 Full Quarts (128 ounces) RILEY'S PRAIRIE ROSE $3.60

2 Full Quarts (64 ounces) RILEY'S FLAG STAFF (Worth $3) FREE

Express Charges Prepaid

We will ship the above offer with the understanding that if the whiskey is not perfectly satisfactory, after you have tried it, you may return same at our expense, and your money will be refunded. Reference, Stock Yards National Bank, Kansas City, Mo.

Order at once, as this offer will be open only a short time. Cut out and return this ad with order. Send remittance to W. R. Riley, or

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A postal card brings the greatest Millwork and Building Material Catalog we have ever issued. Offers 5,000 bargains in everything you need to build, remodel or repair.

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To Develop the Bust

To Beauty Editor: I am so ashamed of my thin bust that I want to ask you if there is any way to develop it. My hips and the rest of my body are right for the present styles and I do not want them any larger but my bust is so flat that I would try anything that gave me hope of even three or four more inches development. MARY S.

The only thing I know of that develops the bust without increasing the size of the hips, or without putting on flesh where not needed, is a prescription put up by The Dr. Kelly Co., especially for small and undeveloped breasts. It is the discovery of a woman physician whose practice was largely among her own sex and in most cases is said to increase the bust measure four to six inches. Send 10c to the Dr. Kelly Co., Dept. 92-AF, Buffalo, N. Y., and they will send you a 50c trial package of the treatment without charge. This is said to be of great value in cases of arrested development of the bust and to give a full, beautiful form without anyone knowing the treatment was used.

Many mothers have told me that after the baby had been weaned, the breasts became flabby and shrunken, but the use of Dr. Kelly's prescription made them full and firm. Do not use pads or bust forms, as they never look natural and have a bad effect upon the general health. Neither would I recommend ordinary flesh builders or tonics, as they increase the hips and limbs and with the present styles the form should be slender everywhere except a generously developed bust.

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We are determined to do ten times more business in the famous **Reliable Made-to-Order Clothing** than ever before in our history. So we are going to select **one live man** to help us in each community and equip him with a Ford automobile **absolutely free. You may be that man if you act at once.**

We do this because we know that a representative can cover ten or twenty times as much country in an automobile—make friends by the hundred—see more people—is happier and healthier—and make **ten times as much money** both for himself and us.

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Even if you use just your spare time you can easily earn **from $10 a day upward,** and in the pleasantest, easiest work imaginable. Just think! **You can be your own boss**—earn a high income—drive your own automobile—and live like a prince—if you will only act at once.

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I was badly ruptured while lifting a trunk several years ago. Doctors said my only hope of cure was an operation. Trusses did me no good. Finally I got hold of something that quickly and completely cured me. Years have passed and the rupture has never returned, although I am doing hard work as a carpenter. There was no operation, no lost time, no trouble. I have nothing to sell, but will give full information about how you may find a complete cure without operation, if you write to me, Eugene M. Pullen, Carpenter, 810 Marcellus Avenue, Manasquan, N. J. Better cut out this notice and show it to any others who are ruptured—you may save a life or at least stop the misery of rupture and the worry and danger of an operation.

PARALYSIS Locomotor Ataxia Conquered at Last Chase's Blood & Nerve Tablets does it. Write for Proof. Advice Free. Dr. CHASE, 224 North 10th St., Philadelphia, Pa.

LOTS OF FUN FOR A DIME
Ventriloquists Double Throat Fits roof of mouth; always invisible; greatest thing yet. Astonish and mystify your friends. Neigh like a horse; whine like a puppy; sing like a canary and imitate birds and beasts of field and forest. LOADS OF FUN. Wonderful invention. Thousands sold. Price only 10 cents; 4 for 25 cents or 12 for 50 cents.
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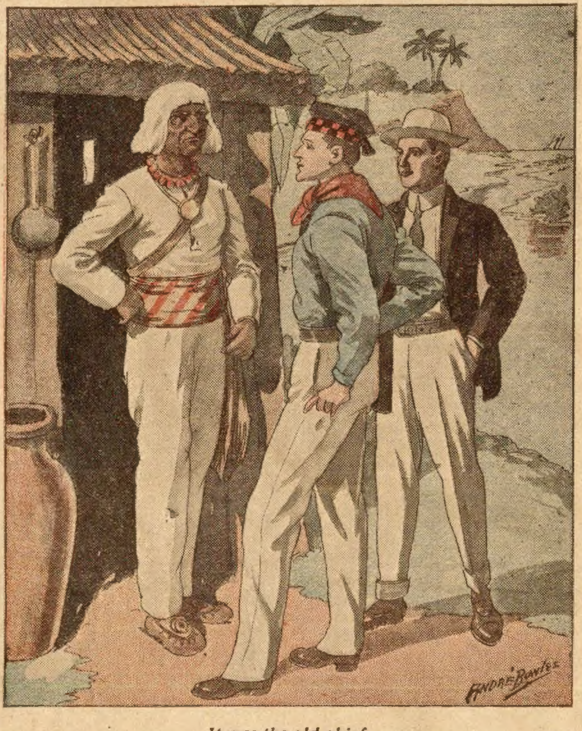
and the shrewdness that had kept the old chief in the van all these years when younger men yearned to usurp his title and power.

The wind was favoring the little felucca, and they sped over the gentle bosom of the blue gulf like a frightened bird with snow-white pinions set; for as the breeze was dead astern, they ran wing-and-wing to catch every shred of it.

At such a pace the yacht might be put to her best speed to keep within seeing distance; but there must come many times when the favor of fortune would turn the other way, and progress could only be made by tacking, while on the other hand, with steam to force a passage, the other craft could go all around them.

It was very evident, though, that they were not fated to be interfered with on the passage up the coast, for that would only be killing the goose that laid the golden egg. Don Jose would be only too glad to lend them a helping hand should they need it, up to the time the treasure-trove had been located, when the boot would be on the other foot, and he might be expected to prove as bitter a foe as he had seemed to be a friend.



It was the old chief.

They fled up the coast all day long, sometimes making almost incredible speed, and again slacking up as the whim of the breeze dictated; still when evening drew on apace, all of them were satisfied with the progress attained, and looked forward to a night of continued gain.

Not once had the smoke of their enemy's yacht died out along the horizon. Now it was but dimly seen like a faint smudge; then again it blackened, as more fuel was thrown into the fires, and inside of half an hour they could make out the shape of the craft through the old-fashioned telescope.

Once, during a temporary lull in the wind, an hour before sundown, the yacht kept on gaining until they could plainly see the figures upon her deck. Negrito declared that without any artificial aid he could make out the forms of Senor Jose, old Pedro Agrillo, and his precious son, the captain of rurales. This seemed almost incredible to Jack, but when he clapped the glass to his eye, greatly to his amazement he found that it was really so, showing what wonderfully keen vision the Indian possessed.

Those on board seemed to realize that they were possibly getting too close, and might give their game away, for about this time, as if discovering the sun glinting on the brass telescope, they "ducked," as Jack expressed it, and remained out of sight while the yacht hove to and allowed the sailing vessel to run further ahead.

"They must be silly if they think we've not got on to their curves," laughed Jack, as he explained what he had just seen.

"Hi 'ave noticed hin the course hof my hexperience," remarked Oscar, seriously, "that some people hare born fools. Hi think that 'idalgo toff his such. D'ye know the bloomin' hidiot makes me think hof han hostrich a-stickin' hof hits 'ead hin a bush the size hof your fist, hand thinkin' hit jolly well 'id. Hit's me 'umble hopinion that hif three wide-awake chaps like hus cawn't knock the lid hoff hin a 'ide-hand-seek game hafter we gets hour paws hon the stuff, we deserves to be left hin the soup. Them's me sentiments, Oscar Thatch, on deck."

Night came down with the suddenness for which the semi-tropics are noted. After the sun sank out of sight it seemed to grow dusk at once, and in a very short space of time Jack found it impossible to read the paper he had taken out of his pocket.

They had nothing to do but fly before the breeze as long as it lasted, keeping close enough to the land to run in behind some of the islands should dirty weather threaten; for none of them cared to be caught out at sea in that little craft when a storm was raging, if it could be avoided.

They did not believe the enemy would attempt to molest them. Senor Jose knew too well the indomitable spirit of old Negrito, and that torture of the most terrible nature would never cause him to disclose his secret.

So the crafty Mexican hidalgo was trying diplomacy. He remembered the fable of the dispute between the wind and the sun as to which was the stronger, and how it was decided to try it out upon the cloak of a traveler; but no matter how violently the wind blew, the man only wrapped his cloak the more tightly about him; but when the sun began to beat heavily down he soon threw it aside, proving that mild measures often accomplish that which violent ones fail to achieve.

The hours passed on, and while there was always one of the sailor lads at the helm of the felucca, nothing of consequence happened during the hours of darkness, and morning found them still swinging onward, their prow pointed toward the north.

As soon as it was light Jack got out the old brass-bound glass and began to scour the surface of the sea astern in the expectation of picking up their pursuer of the preceding day. He was not disappointed, for presently he caught the smudge of smoke that gradually increased in volume, and then he knew they would soon be able to make out the steam yacht itself, for the wind was light at dawn, and they had little more than steerageway.

It began to increase at breakfast time, however, and was soon blowing at even a greater rate than on the preceding day; causing Oscar, as a weather prophet, anxiously to survey the sky, and gravely announce that he expected there would come a change before the day was over, and possibly one of a character such as they might not wholly fancy.

(Continued next week.)

FREE Sweater

Our Heavy Shawl Collar Sweater Coat; Extra heavy weight, wool, shawl collar sweater coat. Made with two pockets, buttons to match coat in color. Has our new storm collar. Practical and serviceable. This coat is made in sizes 34 to 46 inch chest measure. Plain Oxford gray only. **A strictly high-grade garment,** warm, comfortable and very useful for general wear; for hunting, fishing or any out door employment.

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Write for elegant free outfit and full particulars

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GOOD LUNGS MEAN HEALTH

ARE THEY WEAK OR PAINFUL?
Do your lungs ever bleed?
Do you have night sweats?
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These are Regarded Symptoms of Lung Trouble and

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absolutely that Lung Germine, the German Treatment, has cured completely and permanently case after case of Tuberculosis, Chronic Bronchitis, Catarrh of the Lungs, Catarrh of the Bronchial Tubes and other lung troubles. Many sufferers who had lost all hope and who had been given up by physicians have been permanently cured by Lung Germine. If your lungs are merely weak and the disease has not yet manifested itself, you can prevent its development, you can build up your lungs and system to their normal strength and capacity. Lung Germine has cured advanced Tuberculosis, and the patients remain strong and in splendid health today.

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We will gladly send you the proof of many remarkable cures, also a FREE TRIAL of Lung Germine together with our new 40-page book (in colors) on the treatment and care of Tuberculosis and lung trouble.

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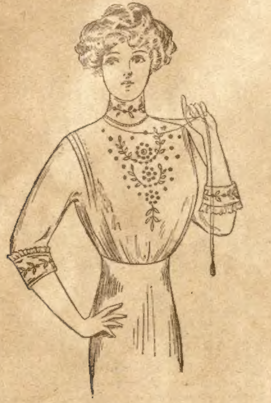
We call the attention of every woman to the beauty of the patterns displayed from week to week, and wish to impress upon each one the splendid quality of material that makes our offer a great bargain in every case. Every offer is complete. You can finish it up without buying anything extra.

These designs are already stamped on best quality cloth, and every set comes to you complete, exactly as described.

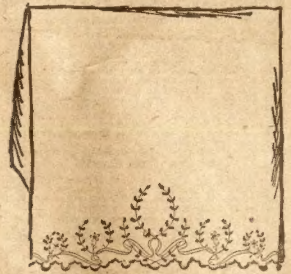
Every one of the designs we are going to offer is new and up-to-date, and nowhere else can you secure the same, as they are made exclusively for us.

You are sure to find many articles that you want if you watch the Ledger each week, and it is so easy to get them, every woman should have little trouble in getting almost every one.



No. 109, Misses' Waist.

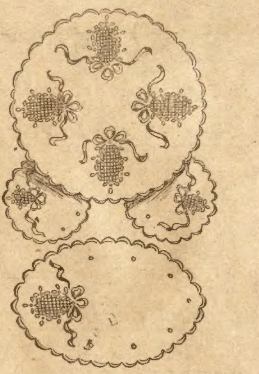
NO. 109, MISSES' WAIST.—The beautiful design in this offer is for solid and eyelet embroidery. It is stamped on fine quality lawn and we include embroidery floss for working. This will be sent to you free of all charges if you send us $2.00 for a year's subscription to the Blade and the Ledger.



No. 105, Table Cover.

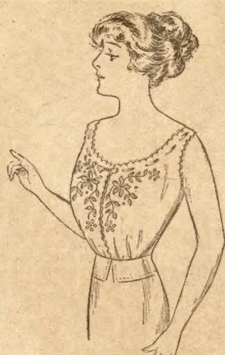
NO. 105, TABLE COVER.—This table cover design is for punch work embroidery, which is very popular just now. The design is stamped on Irish linen, 36x36 inches. This is an exceptional offer. It will be sent free and postage prepaid when you send us $2.00 for a year's subscription to the Blade and Ledger. This includes floss for working.

NO. 104, LUNCH SET.—This set is very useful for the home. It consists of one centerpiece, 18x18 inches; one tray, 15x18 inches, and two doilies, each 9x9 inches. All of these are stamped on the best quality union linon. The design is for punch work and outline embroidery. You can get this set free by sending $1.00 for a year's subscription to the Blade or Ledger. This set is complete with floss for working.



No. 104, Lunch Set.

NO. 108, CORSET COVER.—This corset cover is for solid embroidery and edges to be buttonholed. The pattern is stamped on fine quality nainsook, and embroidery floss is included. We will send it to you free of charge when we receive $1.00 and your order for a year's subscription to the Blade or the Ledger.



No. 108, Corset Cover.

* * *

RESINOL HEALS ITCHING SKINS

And Clears Unsightly Complexions.

Resinol Ointment, with Resinol Soap, stops itching instantly, quickly and easily heals the most distressing cases of eczema, rash, ringworm, tetter or other tormenting skin or scalp eruptions, and clears away pimples, blackheads, redness, roughness, and dandruff, when other treatments have proven only a waste of time and money.

So why don't you let Resinol stop your skin trouble? Resinol is a physician's prescription which has been used by other doctors for eighteen years in the treatment of all sorts of skin humors, sores, boils, wounds, and piles. You can use Resinol Ointment (50c. and $1.00), and Resinol Soap (25c.), freely, with the perfect assurance that it contains nothing that could injure the tenderest skin. Sold by every druggist. Do not let similarity of name or appearance fool you into accepting a "substitute" for Resinol. For trial free, write to Dept. F, Resinol, Baltimore, Md.

Snares of Fate

(Continued from page four.)

humble, uneducated, but as pure, good and incorruptible as she was beautiful. In order to make her you own, you conceived the diabolical purpose of deceiving her by a mock marriage. I found this out, and I offered my services, knowing you were unaware that I had been ordained. I wanted to save Florence Denison from becoming your victim. Apparently, I lent myself to your base purpose, but the marriage I performed for you and that poor girl was binding before God and before men."

"Thank God!" burst from Harmer Stanley's lips. As Charles Burk glanced at him inquiringly, he continued: "I have been deeply remorseful for the wrong I did that unfortunate girl. Her white, anguish-stricken face when I told her she was not my wife has never ceased to haunt me. She left me in the hour that she learned the truth, and I never saw her again. I learned that she died a few months later."

"Yes, in giving birth to your child."

"My God! Was there a child?" groaned Stanley.

"Yes, I have ascertained that Florence gave birth to a child in a poor lodging-house in Norfolk."

"What became of the child?" queried Stanley, eagerly.

"That I was unable to ascertain. I thought that your daughter, the moment I saw her, was Florence's child of whom you had obtained possession."

Stanley shook his head.

"No, you were misled by a chance resemblance. 'The girl has eyes very like Florence's, but her mother is as unlike that poor girl as daylight is to darkness. Some time I will tell you all about the girl, but not now. You saved me from myself, from great guilt, and I am deeply grateful to you. But that poor girl died believing that she was what I would have made her. I wronged her in intent, if not in reality. I must find her child and mine. I must atone to the child for the wrong done the mother. Will you help me to find the child?"

"Yes, gladly," replied the Rev. Charles Burk. "I was sent as a missionary to India soon after I married you and Florence Denison," he went on to explain. "I returned to this country seven months ago. I shall never cease to regret that I went away without telling you that the marriage was a real one. I thought that you would be very apt to find out later that I was an ordained minister of the Gospel and that you and Florence were man and wife. I will never rest until I have found Florence's child."

Next week's Ledger will contain the concluding chapters of this remarkable story. You will miss a great treat if you do not read it to the end. We will give you constantly the very best stories of entertainment that money will buy, so send in your subscription and take the Ledger regularly, if you are not doing so. You will not regret it.

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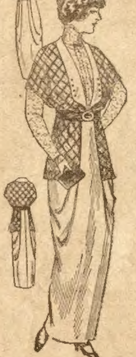
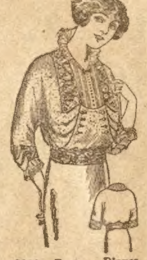
The great difficulty in making one's own garments is to get suitable patterns. Our women readers could make many pretty and useful things for themselves and their children if they could get well-made patterns. We have arranged to give our readers a pattern service unexcelled.

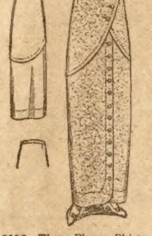
We make a splendid offer of the best and most fashionable patterns that can be produced by the greatest designers of New York and Paris, and what is more, these patterns will be within the reach of every one, and every one will have a wide selection to choose from. **Read our splendid Offer below.**



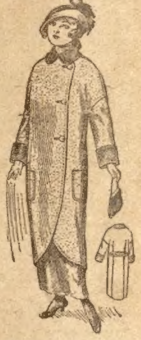
8099 Over Blouse with Tunic and Skirt, 34 to 42 bust.



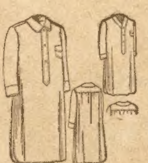
8122 Fancy Blouse, 34 to 44 bust.



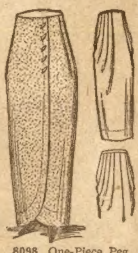
8106 Three-Piece Skirt, with Simulated Tunic, 22 to 32 waist.



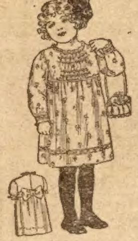
8100 Coat with Kimono Sleeves for Misses and Small Women, 16 and 18 years.



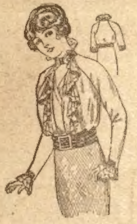
8094 Men's Night Shirt, 34 to 44 breast.



8098 One-Piece Peg Top Skirt, 22 to 32 waist.



8095 Child's Dress, 2 to 6 years.



8115 Fancy Blouse, 34 to 42 bust.

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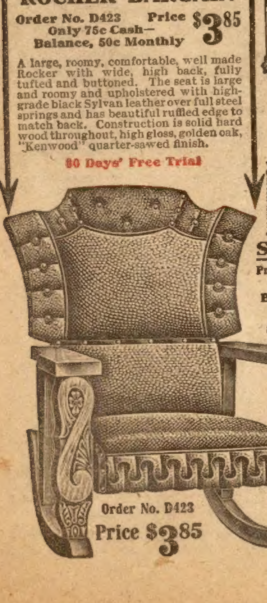

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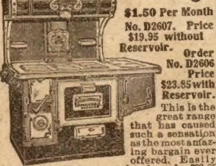

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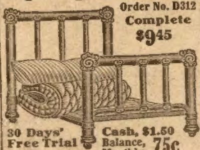

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Cash, $1.50 Balance, Monthly 75c

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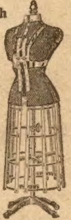
Spear's Latest "Crown" Adjustable Dress Form

Price $12^{45}

$1.50 Cash Balance 75c Monthly



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Spear's "Steinway" Sewing Machine

Price Complete, only $18^{45}

$3.00 Cash—Balance, $1.25 a Month

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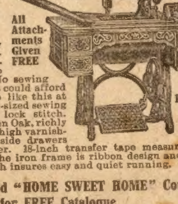

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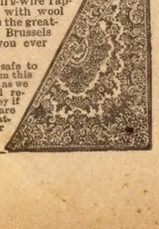

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